IN THIS ISSUE:

Crikey!

THUNDERBIRDS

The Ballad Of HALO JONES

TORNADO

GARTH

PLUS LOTS MORE!

Crikey!

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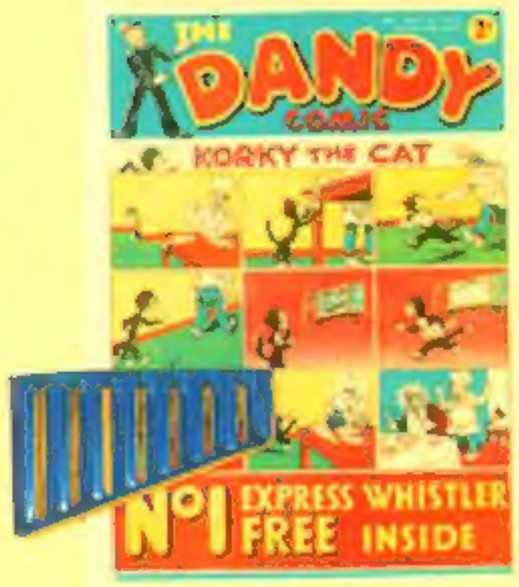

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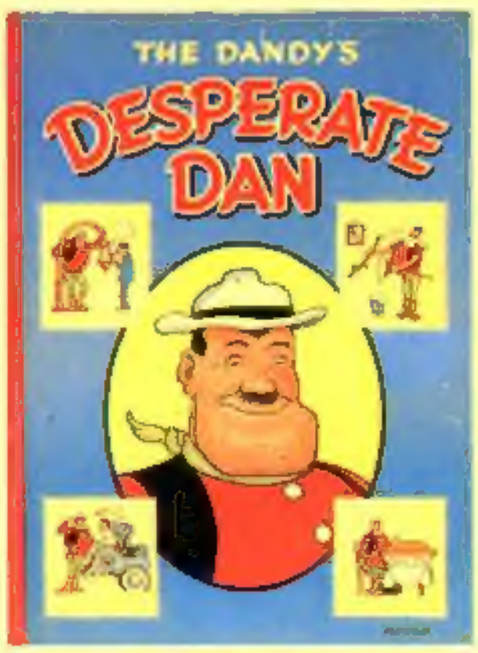

WELCOME TO Crikey!

Brian M Clarke *Editor* **Glenn B Fleming** *Designer* **Tom Sweetman** *Publicist*

Crikey! Chums...

This is the time of year when the bookshops fill with Christmas annuals and those special nostalgic collections of comic strips and features taken from old comics – watch out for *High Noon,* a great collection of western strips this year. It's a corker and is edited by *Crikey!* chum Steve Holland.

It's the time of the year when the wooden walls of the *Crikey!* Shed shake and wobble as we fight to take a look-see at the latest reprint offerings and new annuals with that Christmas morning smell.

There has been a real boon in reprint publishing over the past four or five years. What started with reprints of *Jackie* and DCT war comics has grown into its own shelf space in many of the larger bookshops. Our huge Waterstones bookshops in Manchester (we have two of them) each have a large space devoted to annuals, facsimile editions and reprint collections. It's all evidence that interest in our comic heritage is not only alive and well but growing in its influence.

All this talk of Christmas brings us nicely to my *Crikey!* Newsflash.

Our next issue – on sale towards the end of November – will be a special Christmas **full-colour** spectacular! Our friends at Blasé Books contacted us earlier this year after we confessed to Phil Clarke (no relation to ye editor) that we would love to do a colour edition. With almost unbelievable generosity, Blasé said they would help out by sponsoring the colour. Most definitely an early Christmas present for *Crikey!* and its readers.

So next time you write to them or see them at comic fairs, let them know how much you appreciate what they have done. Have a look at their ad on the inside and outside back covers of this issue and maybe you would want to say thank you in a more direct way!

Finally... have a look at the great Colin Whittock cartoon below. Colin not only sent us a sub request but took the time to draw us this wonderful *Crikey!* subs cartoon. Thanks Colin. This could be the start of a new trend with a comic collecting cartoon of the issue. So get drawing now.

See you in about 60 days.

Cheers,
Brian

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Crikey! Chum of the Month is **Blasé Books**

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Note: *The closing date for booking ads for issue seven is 1 November 2008.*

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NUTTY NOTIONS

Each issue of *Crikey!* features a selection of some of the lovingly bizarre concepts that have graced the pages of British comics in the years past. Once again *Tony Ingram* proves that he has read way too many comics in his time... *Ideas and nominations for future Nutty Notions gratefully accepted through the* Crikey! *website (www.crikeyuk.co.uk), click 'contact' and away you go! Enjoy!*

KEVIN KEEGAN SOCCER SPECIAL (IPC, 1980)
ARTIST: ANTONIO GARCIA

There have been a lot of weird-looking characters in the history of British comics, but this one – red jersey, shorts, huge mass of dark hair – is certainly one of the strangest, although also one of the most recognisable.

No, it's not Dennis the Menace – it's the weirdly permed soccer superstar himself, Kevin Keegan, who in 1980 was the star of his own 60 page biographical comic published by IPC.

Why? Well, curly Kev was just returning to England after a spell in Hamburg, and obviously someone at IPC was a football fan, so why not? Personally, I could think of a lot of reasons why not, not least of them the fact that it was a very silly idea, but never mind. Oh, and there was also a full-page photo feature on Kevin's haircuts...

NO, YOU MAY NOT HAVE TIME OFF TO WATCH THE FOOTBALL MATCH. WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M RUNNING—A CHARITY?
BUT IT'S A CUP MATCH AND WE HAVE THE TICKETS!

THE STAR SPANGLED BANGER (THE VICTOR, 1970S)
ARTIST: ALBERT HOLROYD

Fred Lewis and Oily Smith worked as mechanics at Scrogg's Garage, and hated pretty much every minute of it. Luckily, if the mean and miserable Scrogg's attitude got too much for them, they had the Star Spangled Banger to cheer them up – a battered old car with a mind of its own!

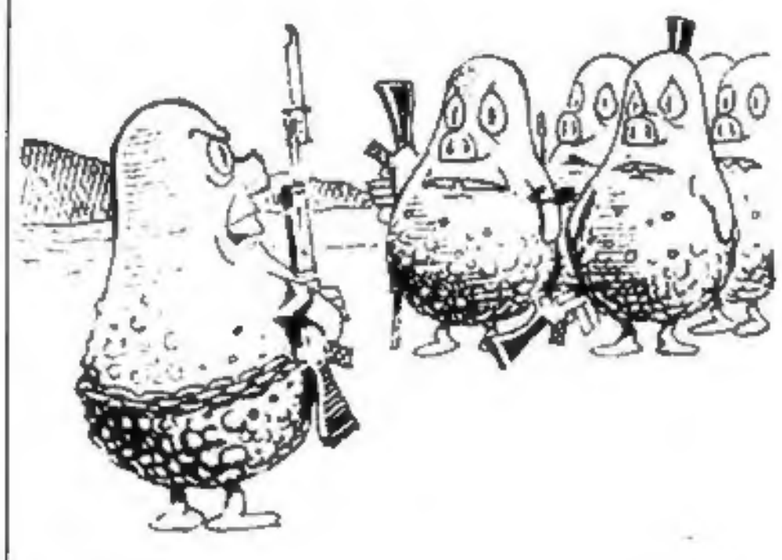
Starry may have been basically a poor man's version of a certain Volkswagen beloved of Disney fans, but he was a handy heap to have around in a pinch.

Sadly, I suspect he has long since failed his last MOT...

THE BATTLERS FROM THE BLACK CLOUD (THE VICTOR, 1976)
ARTIST: CD BAGNALL

When the planet Mandrego was invaded by monsters, the pacifistic Mandregans knew exactly what they needed to defend them – a platoon of plucky British commandos, our damp little island's fame having clearly spread even to other star systems!

So they sent a black cloud to transport the troops, who promptly rose to the occasion as expected. It must be admitted that Sgt Major Spencer and his men's blasé reaction to being abducted by pear shaped, buck toothed idiots from the depths of space was not entirely believable.



Still, stiff upper lip and all that...

BINX AND HIS SPHINX (THE VICTOR, 1976)
ARTIST: TONY COLEMAN

Professor Theopilus Binx was pronounced unfit for service, but he knew he had a patriotic duty to fight the nasty Nazis.

So Theo (somehow) made himself the leader of a band of Arabs and began fighting a guerrilla war in the desert from his secret, hidden base-inside a bloody great Sphinx!

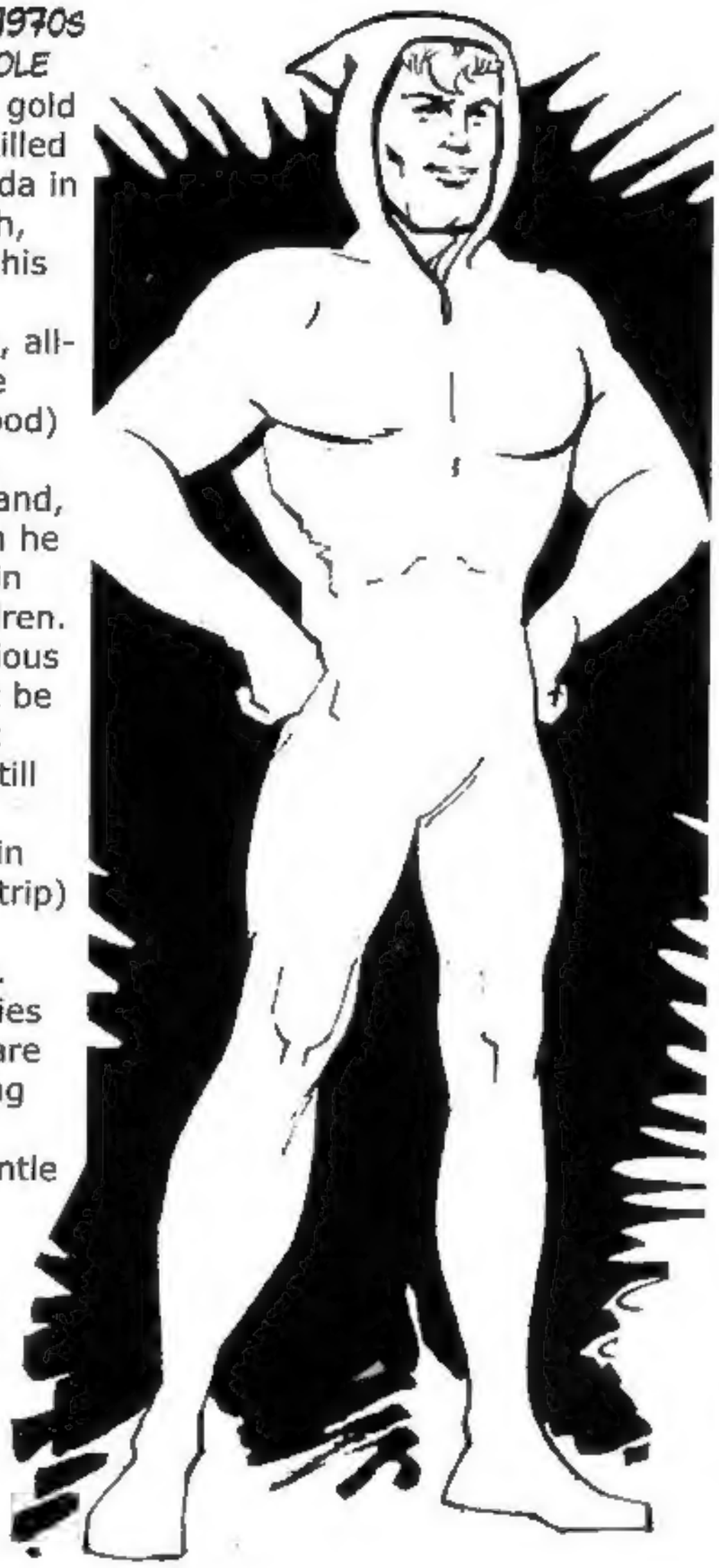
Curiously, even when camped right next door to the supposedly jinxed Sphinx, the Jerries never seemed to realise it was hollow and contained a horde of hostile natives and a nutty scientist...

SUPER SPOOK (COR!, 1970S
ARTIST: JOHN CATCHPOLE

Jeremiah Smith was a gold miner before he was killed in an accident in Canada in 1896. Curiously though, instead of moving on, his spirit donned a rather camp looking all-white, all-in-one outfit (complete with charming pixie hood) and returned to Earth, more specifically, England, where for some reason he decided to help those in need, particularly children.

Super Spook is a curious kind of ghost: he can't be seen, because he's not really there, but he's still solid enough to touch things and, if covered in flour (as he is in one strip) it will stick to him and make his shape visible.

Still, the inconsistencies regarding his abilities are barely worth mentioning next to the sheer improbability of the gentle giant from Canada choosing to spend his afterlife hanging around the north of England dressed up in a set of hooded long-johns...



TEDDY'S BEAR (WHIZZER & CHIPS, 1974)
ARTIST: UNKNOWN

"Teddy Tomlinson lived in the village of Upper Puddleton, and had a pet bear called Big B! Although friendly and loveable, Big B was always getting into trouble..."

Yeah, right – little things like ripping out the postman's throat, presumably! But, no – Big B, in the grand comic's tradition, is almost human and would never indulge in such behaviour. Why, he even wears pajamas in bed!

At one point, Big B has been ordered to appear in court to face trial for causing mayhem and the townsfolk are calling for him to be jailed – while barmy old Granddad Tomlinson is reading up on law to defend him!

Hello? He's a bear, you Muppets! Oh, what's the use...?

FOOTBALL FAMILY ROBINSON (ROY OF THE ROVERS, 1978)
ARTIST: JOE COLQUHOUN

Thatchem United was a unique football club, playing in the fourth division. Unique, because it was run solely by the Robinson family, and the players were all Robinsons, too!

With the formidable Ma Robinson as manager, Viv as club secretary and young Specky as trainer, Ginger, Fred, Ron, Alf, Giraffe, Grizzly, Crash, Cyril, Titch, Bert, Jack and Ahmed (!) Robinson battled their way across the playing fields of England, one of comics' strangest footballing soap operas. Sadly, I gather they were cruelly robbed of their chance at first division stardom when Ahmed proved to be an impostor and Grizzly proved to be an ursine quadruped...

SHERIFF STARR (WHIZZER AND CHIPS, OCT 1979-FEB 1980)
ARTIST: UNKNOWN

Western strips were always popular in British comics, but by the late 70s jaded readers needed something more than the standard saloon shoot-out to capture their interest. Enter Sheriff Steve Starr, the youthful defender of the peace in the improbably named town of Bulletsville!

Steve was an ex-circus animal trainer, and when he came to the spectacularly lawless Bulletsville at the request of an impressed mayor, he brought his 'deputies' with him: namely, the animals from the circus! Quite how Steve intended to tame the town with the aid of a Rocky the gorilla and a Jezebel the elephant and nary a six gun in sight, I'm not entirely sure, but it seemed to work!

Though what was never adequately explained during the strip's brief run was how he'd managed to nick his furry friends from the circus without anyone objecting to the loss of their major attractions – surely they weren't the kid's personal property?

Some strips last forever, some don't last at all. Garth falls somewhere in between. Although one of the longest running adventure strips in newspaper history, Garth remains a mystery. And that, I suspect, would suit both the character and his creators.

GARTH

BY GLENN B FLEMING

Although he has been around for over 60 years, Garth remains an enigma and, though it has not appeared in print for over ten years, it is still one of the most revered, underrated and exciting strips of any time. Although initially based on DC comics' Superman, Garth is actually the forerunner of television's *Quantum Leap*.

The strip is essentially tales of a man who transcends time and space, falling literally into other epochs, albeit for a brief few hours or days. He is constantly travelling through time, living an extraordinary life and gathering extraordinary experiences. Despite all of this, Garth remains a somewhat remote and tragic figure. Lost and alone and at times close to desperation, he is literally destined to live throughout eternity.

Quite an exceptional character, that Garth.

And so were his creators.

TITCHY START

Stephen R Dowling was born in 1904. Having studied art at both the Liverpool School of Art and the Westminster School of Art he got his first job freelancing for the Charles Dobson agency in the late '20s.

Dowling's first cartoon strip was 'Tich', created and produced by himself and his

(BELOW): ARTIST STEPHEN DOWLING'S OVERUSE OF CROSS HATCHING WOULD OCCASSIONALY LEAVE THE EARLY GARTH STRIPS MUDDY AND UNCLEAR (THE CAPTIVE,1957)

...IN ALL THIS, WE SEEK YOUR CO-OPERATION, SKALDOR
YOU SHALL HAVE IT... THE POWER-HOUSE WILL SOON BE WORKING AGAIN, YOU SAY?
YES...BUT THE POWER IT RADIATES WILL ONLY BE OF USE TO CERTAIN ROBOTS AND MACHINES IN WHICH WE ARE FITTING NEW PICK-UP UNITS!
WITHIN TWO DAYS WE SHALL HAVE A SPECIAL ANDROID ON EVERY DOMAIN THROUGHOUT THE PLANET... ANDROIDS PROCESSED TO ORGANISE FOR SURVIVAL!
THEY'LL BE GIVING ORDERS... NOT TAKING THEM!
R.I

GARTH HAS SERVED THE PROPHECY! IF HE HAD NOT TOLD CUSTER OF OUR GREAT CAMP WE WOULD NOT HAVE THIS VICTORY! LET HIM DIE WITH HONOUR—KILL HIM. TWO HORSES!

(ABOVE): FRANK BELLAMY'S INCREDIBLE ARTWORK FROM 'SUNDANCE' (1971). ARTWORK BY FRANK BELLAMY AND SCRIPT BY JIM EDGAR PART OF BELLAMY'S ATTRACTION WAS HIS ATTENTION TO DETAIL

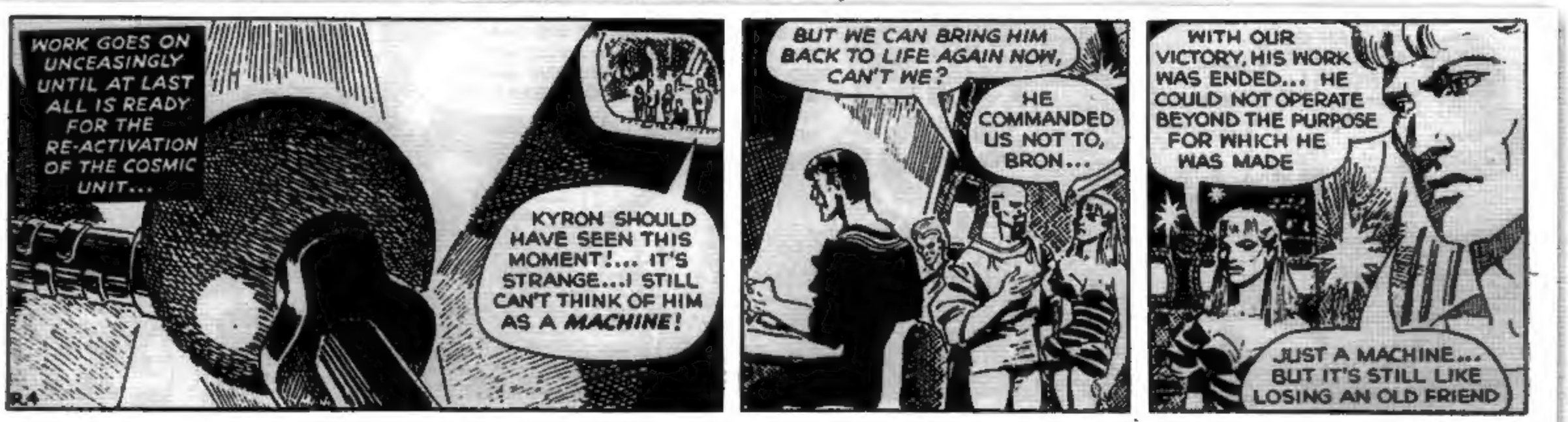
brother Frank for the *Daily Mirror* in 1931. Steve and Frank also produced 'Ruggles' - a strip about suburban life - which ran from 1935 until its cancellation in August 1957. In 1936, Dowling took over the strip 'Belinda Blue Eyes', which he continued until 1943.

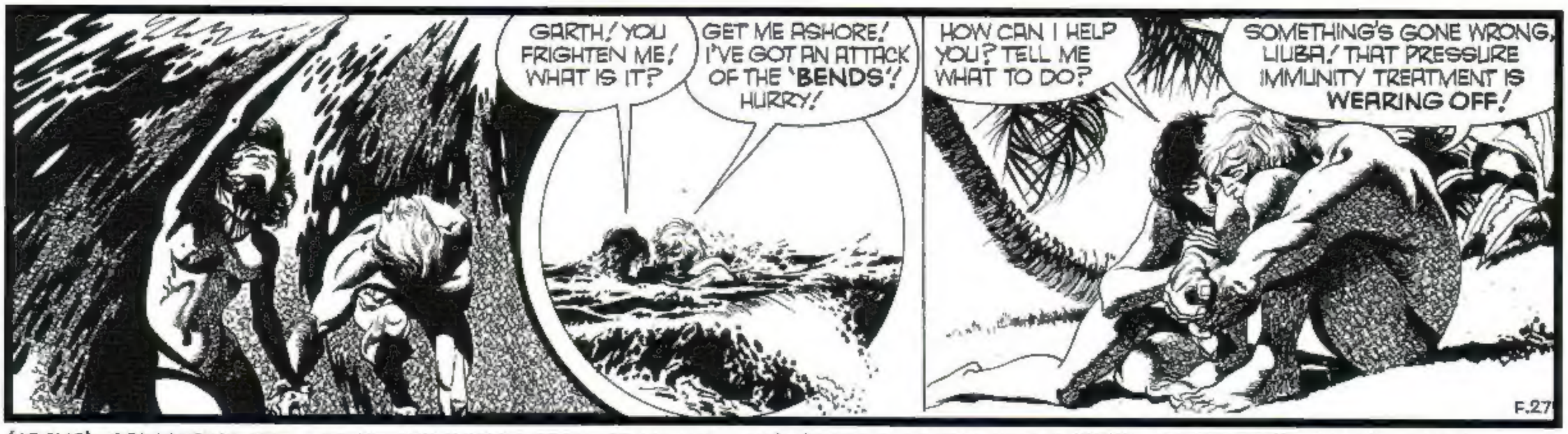
Dowling served as a Captain in the Home Guard during the Second World War. After the war, he joined the *Mirror* staff and created the comic strip 'Keeping Up With The Joneses'. But that was later. In the summer of 1943, and by now an established strip cartoonist, Dowling and sometime collaborator BBC producer Gordon Boshell were approached by their editor to create a new strip for the paper. Their story conferences and imagination produced one of the more enduring characters of the comic strip medium: Garth.

Following approval from the editorial team, Garth was first published on 24 July 1943. Although heavily involved with the concept, Boshell never actually wrote the strip, leaving that to Dowling, already under pressure to produce the artwork for the strips themselves. Almost drowning with this new strip and other deadlines ('Ruggles' among them), Dowling struggled on regardless before help came in the form of writer Don Freeman. Freeman took over the writing chores only several weeks into the project and enabled Dowling to concentrate on the art. >

A YELLOW SCALP FOR MY LODGE-POLE!
A touch with a coup-stick, the plains Indian ritual before despatching a vanquished enemy...
WHAT THE DEVIL! AN INDIAN! AND HE'S OUT TO SCALP ME!
AYEEE!
HIS SCALP IS MINE! I MADE THE COUP-STROKE!
THEN TAKE IT, LITTLE BEAVER!
WHAT! THIS COULD BE THE TALL WHITE-EYE SEEN IN A VISION BY BULL THE HUNKPAPA MEDICINE-MAN!
DO NOT HARM THAT MAN! I WANT HIM ALIVE!
BUT HE IS MINE, TWO HORSES! I MADE THE COUP!
AND I AM YOUR CHIEF, LITTLE BEAVER! DOES A HAWK DEFY AN EAGLE?
TAKE HIM, MY FATHER! HE FOUGHT LIKE A MAN—DO NOT GIVE HIM TO THE WOMEN FOR TORTURE!
THE BODIES OF U.S. CAVALRY TROOPERS... I'M BACK IN TIME... BACK IN THE OLD RED INDIAN WARS!
PLEASE, GARTH—CARRY ME TO MY FATHER'S TEPEE...
FALLING LEAF...
I AM A CHIEF'S DAUGHTER YET LOVE MAKES ME TALK WITHOUT SHAME...
HOW ELSE WOULD A WOMAN IN LOVE TALK?
SO LITTLE TIME TOGETHER BEFORE YOUR PEOPLE AND MINE FIGHT AND KILL EACH OTHER, FALLING LEAF...
DO NOT TALK OF DEATH, GARTH! THAT IS NOT FOR LOVERS...
While Captain Petersen is delayed in his quest...
SIR, THE PARTY OF INJUN WOMEN AND CHILDREN HAVE REACHED THE CHEYENNE LODGE!
DAWN O'HARA AND THAT ROCK-SLIDE!
DO WE GO BACK NOW, CAPTAIN?
HOW CAN I FACE GENERAL CUSTER WITHOUT O'HARA'S HIDE? BUT I CAN'T SEE HIM DOWN THERE...

(BELOW): BEAUTIFUL FUTURISTIC ART FROM STEPHEN DOWLING (THE CAPTIVE, 1957)


WORK GOES ON UNCEASINGLY UNTIL AT LAST ALL IS READY FOR THE RE-ACTIVATION OF THE COSMIC UNIT...
KYRON SHOULD HAVE SEEN THIS MOMENT!... IT'S STRANGE...I STILL CAN'T THINK OF HIM AS A MACHINE!
BUT WE CAN BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE AGAIN NOW, CAN'T WE?
HE COMMANDED US NOT TO, BRON...
WITH OUR VICTORY, HIS WORK WAS ENDED... HE COULD NOT OPERATE BEYOND THE PURPOSE FOR WHICH HE WAS MADE
JUST A MACHINE... BUT IT'S STILL LIKE LOSING AN OLD FRIEND


GARTH! YOU FRIGHTEN ME! WHAT IS IT?
GET ME ASHORE! I'VE GOT AN ATTACK OF THE 'BENDS'! HURRY!
HOW CAN I HELP YOU? TELL ME WHAT TO DO?
SOMETHING'S GONE WRONG, LIUBA! THAT PRESSURE IMMUNITY TREATMENT IS WEARING OFF!
P.27

(ABOVE): STAGGARING ART, LAYOUT AND DESIGN FROM FRANK BELLAMY'S 'PEOPLE OF THE ABYSS' (1972). CONTRAST BELLAMY'S FIGURE RENDERING TO THAT OF JOHN ALLARD FROM 'SUNDANCE' (1971) (BELOW)

Suddenly...
A swipe of a massive paw tears the rifle from Garth's grasp...
JOE! OVER HERE-QUICK!
LOOKS LIKE I HAVE TO SEE THIS ONE THROUGH ALONE! WHAT THE HELL'S HAPPENED TO JOE?
Garth recalls an old hunting trick, lets his body sag lifelessly and...
AAAAH!
I'M IN A JAM! IF I CALL FOR JOE THIS DAMN GRIZZLY WILL BE ON ME AGAIN!
ARM ISN'T BROKEN... THINK I CAN USE IT...
Garth's movement incites the bear to attack again...
IF I CAN TEAR OFF THIS BRANCH IT WILL GIVE ME A WEAPON OF SORTS!
IF I DON'T GET HIM THIS TIME I'M FINISHED!
The furious grizzly lumbers straight on to the sharp branch...
GOD! THAT WAS CLOSE... BUT WHERE'S JOE, MY GUIDE? I NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION - QUICK!
I SEE A VISION... OF A GREAT IRON BIRD...
...AND IN ITS BELLY IS A TALL WHITE-EYE WITH YELLOW HAIR... HE WILL COME AMONG OUR PEOPLE...
An airliner circles to land at Chicago airport...
WELL, PROF, I'LL BE LEAVING YOU HERE - I'LL GET A SPOT OF HUNTING IN, WHILE YOU DO YOUR LECTURING IN SAN FRANCISCO!
OUI, GARTH, MON AMI! YOU WILL JOIN ME LATER ON...
TRY TO KEEP OUT OF TROUBLE!
I'LL TRY, PROF, BUT TROUBLE SEEMS TO PICK
THIS IS MARVELLOUS COUNTRY, JOE!
SURE IS, GARTH! NO WONDER THEM OLD REDSKINS - RED CLOUD, CRAZY HORSE, SITTING BU... AND ALL THE REST - PUT UP SUCH A HELLUVA FIGHT TO HOLD ON TO IT!
BUT I AIN'T BEEN HIRED TO SHOW YOU THE SIGHTS - YOU PAID ME TO GUIDE YOU AFTER A ROGUE BU... GRIZZLY...
AND THAT'S HIM OVER THERE - THROUGH THE TREES!
Garth is making a big mistake in the American West...
THE GRIZZLY'S SCENTED US! TAKE HIM, GARTH - AND TAKE HIM GOOD! BOY, HE'S MEAN ALL THROUGH!
RIGHT, JOE!
CRACK
DRAT! I'VE ONLY WINGED HIM - AND HE'S GOT UNDER COVER!

SCRATCHY

Garth's 'origins' were strange and bordered on the absurd. Originally he had been an amnesia victim, washed up on a beach somewhere in Scotland on a flimsy raft. This introduction proved as flimsy as the raft and Freeman set about rescuing Garth's already sinking feet by giving him a more believable, solid background.

While having a hand in creating such a colossus as Garth, Dowling's drawing was never that good. What he did possess, however, was the imagination to develop the character with almost every panel he produced. His 'scratchy' rendering was typical of the time and, it must be said, very 'British'. Joe Calqhoun, who would find fame much later with 'Charley's War' and other important work, drew in a similar style. The science fiction element consolidated Garth's stature as an adequately written and drawn strip.

PEACEFUL BREAK

The strip was well received by the public and was a welcome ten-minute escape from the tensions of the war. Garth's first time-travelling episodes were published as 'The Seven Ages of Garth', running from 18 September 1944 until 20 January 1946. This adventure introduced Garth's most important secondary character, Professor Lumiere. Lumiere would play the role of psychoanalyst as a foil to Garth's troubled mind. The scene was set. Lumiere was able to take Garth back through his many incarnations and this story device enabled Freeman to take our hero to many strange and wonderful places at various points through time.

By now the strip was almost three years old and Freeman decided it was time for Garth to reveal his (new) origins. 'The Sage of Garth' showed a very young, almost lifeless Garth washed up on the shores of Shetland. He was rescued by an elderly couple, adopted and raised by them as their child.

Garth of course excelled in everything he did (including developing super-strength) before becoming a captain in the Royal Navy.

Sadly, almost 30 years of continuity had passed before we found out that Garth had, in fact, extraterrestrial origins; our hero being

THEY ARE WHAT ARE LEFT OF GARTH'S FOLLOWERS, SUPREMO – A SCURVY GANG!
THEY HAVE MY RESPECT – THEY FOUGHT WELL! SWEAR THEM INTO OUR RANKS!
G253
AND WHAT OF THESE TWO?
SEE THEY ARE BURIED WITH DUE CEREMONY IN TENOCHTITLAN! A HERO AND A KING'S DAUGHTER!
But in the moment of death, the wheel of Time has carried Garth back into the present and the hotel room in Mexico City
ATACAMA'S MASK... IT'S DROPPED FROM THE WALL AND SHATTERED.. BUT I CAN STILL HEAR HER VOICE
FRANK BELLAMY

(ABOVE): GARTH REACHED THE NEW WORLD AT THE SAME TIME AS THE CONQUISTADORS IN 'THE MASK OF ATACAMA' (1973)

descended from a Space Exploration Commander by the name of Wolfen who came to Earth from the planet Saturnis (as seen in 'Journey into Fear'). To this writer, such devices tend to stretch the suspension of disbelief just a little too far.

Captain Garth's (terrestrial) ship was later torpedoed and again he was washed up on a distant shore this time to be rescued by Gala, a beautiful native girl. Gala fell for the handsome stranger and he for her, but we later learn that Garth's true love is the mysterious Astra.

Astra also turns up in the same time periods as Garth in 'other forms' pursuing her lover down through the ages. This woman must be either desperate or deeply in love - or perhaps she's both! Astra, it turns out, is the last of the ancient race of god-like entities dating back thousands of years to long gone civilisations. The old race had conquered the natural world and was virtually eternal.

Unforunately, falling in love was forbidden to these 'eternals' for fear that this 'human' emotion would lead to ultimate corruption. Of course, Astra fell for the handsome Garth. That's a good enough reason for Astra to ignore the taboo when she meets the love of her life! However, love Garth or not, Astra always brought trouble with her in the shape of her fellow eternal Apollo (who had aligned himself with the darkside). Garth, Astra and Apollo would have many encounters down the ages.

FATAL ATTRACTION

Sadly, Astra would finally succumb to suicide, fearful she would be taken over by the darkside due to her love for her man.

Garth, naturally is not pleased having encountered this woman all through time to be thwarted by such a minor detail. Well, she only got in the way of a good story!

John Allard, a long time associate of Dowlings, took over the illustration chores in 1957 following Dowling's retirement (Steve Dowling died in 1986 aged 82). In the 14 years since the strip's conception, Dowling had produced 59 adventures and thousands of panels of art. From 1957 to 1971, Allard >

GARTH RETURNS!

And so Garth returns to our 'pages' or, at least, on the Daily Mirror website. As of Wednesday 13 August 2008 we can look at the new adventures of this long enduring, enigmatic character on-line. The new strip is written and drawn by Huw J Davies and will soon be seen in the actual newspaper.

That said, I'm disappointed. To say the least. The strip looks like one of the current style American comic books - slick, economic with line and complete with eye-jangling layout. Add those key elements to massive word balloons (see episode 19 in particular) covering most of the art and you'll get the picture - or rather, you won't. The lettering is nice though.

The colouring technique makes Garth look more like Father Christmas rather than the intrepid hero we learned to love and care about in days long past. And it's not as if the medium prevents the use of full colour. The storytelling is slack - consisting mainly of head and shoulder shots, rather than establishing shots just to let us know where we are every now and then.

Davies' art style is reminiscent of Marvel's Walter Simonson, who once-upon-a-time blazed his way though the pages of The Mighty Thor *and* Fantastic Four *in the late 80s. Garth himself appears to be a cross between footballer-turned-actor Vinny Jones and any Frank Miller character - stereotypically muscle bound, long faced and chissle-chinned, dressed in tighter than is healthy pants and the obligatory white T-shirt. Given the medium and the space available on the web, the series is already flawed - but that's just my opinion. Check it out at:*

http://www.mirror.co.uk/fun-games/cartoons/garth/

Work: © HUW-J Hayena Studios LTD 2008
Garth: © MGN LTD 2008

FROM THE THIRD EVER GARTH (JULY 1943): THE LEGEND OF GARTH SETS THE TONE FOR THE NEXT 50 YEARS - GARTH WITH A WOMAN, NATURALLY! (ARTWORK BY STEPHEN DOWLING & JOHN ALLARD SCRIPT BY DON FREEMAN)

(BELOW): THE QUINTISSENTIAL GARTH - ART BY FRANK BELLAMY, NATURALLY

chronicled the adventures of Garth until Frank Bellamy (see *Crikey!* 1) took over to produce what is widely regarded as the ultimate Garth - at least visually.

Allard, again, was not that good an illustrator, but there was always something in his work that would stir something and capture the interest. That said, it was only in October 1971 and almost 30 years after the strip first appeared that the character would finally hint at his true potential with the arrival of Frank Bellamy.

Sadly, after five years of outstanding artwork on the strip, Bellamy died at the age of 59 in 1976.

Allard wrote the Garth scripts for Bellamy's portayal. Following Bellamy's sudden death, Martin Asbury took over the artwork, illustrating Garth until the strip was cancelled in 1991.

Through those years the strip lost its way, hardly even a shadow of itself. The writing was, though adequate, not like the work before. Adequate is not good enough for a character like Garth. The artwork wasn't much better; having reached the dizzying heights of a craftsman like Bellamy. It's still amazing, though, to think that only four artists drew Garth in the first fifty years of his life.

PASSING ON

The Garth mythos is a frustrating and fantastic concept. Stories that could be set anywhere in time so no end to settings, costumes, situations.

Strong, believable characters.

Good writers and good artists.

Yet although it lasted longer than most (half a century!) Garth seemed to splutter through his world(s) and though a relative success for all those years, the character that is Garth has never been fully exploited.

Condemned to the 'lowly' newspaper strip format from conception undoubtedly led to a lack of true vision for the character by its creators. And yet, stifled and frustrated as they may have been because of the format, these few creators still conjured up some of the best work in British comic strip form. But it could and should have been much better.

Only Frank Bellamy's splendid interpretation put Garth anywhere near where he ought to have been - right at the top of British comic production. One can only wonder what glorious material may have been produced had the foresight been there and allowed a free reign.

At last, Garth is back. Maybe we might just be able to go back to a time when storytelling was the key. Looking at the new strip, it seems that opportunity has been lost.

It just goes to show what wonders the creative mind can produce in three tiny panels a day.

When they set their mind to it. ●

CHILLED TO THE BONE

POCKET CHILLER LIBRARY

BY CRANSTON MCMILLAN

The Pocket Chiller Library. *Those words will no doubt bring a warm glow of nostalgia to many a 40-something horror fan. These delightful digest-sized comics have defied the disdain of many a greedy comic book dealer and have over the years become very, very collectable. Indeed, on the irregular occasion that an issue pops up on eBay and other internet sites, they have been consistently snapped up by an eager hardcore of collectors hungry to add new titles to their collections. One issue,* 'Hands of Evil'*, reached £15 from a 99p opening bid. Not at all bad for a comic that was once deemed to be worthless. I'm sure that would bring a tear to the eye of one very short sighted book dealer who unceremoniously tossed two box loads on to his kid's Guy Fawkes bonfire proclaiming that they were "not worth a damn".*

HORRIBLE HISTORY

Pocket Chiller's publishing history is at best chequered. Printed in Spain and put out in the UK by the legendary Top Sellers Ltd from Soho's Wardour Street during the early 1970s, the Pocket Library series comprised of 5 titles: *War*, *Western*, *Detective*, *Chiller* and *Romance*.

Over the couple of years that the Pocket Library were on sale the size and cover presentation would change quite a few times.

Artists and writers were sadly never credited and the month or year of issue was also conspicuous by its absence.

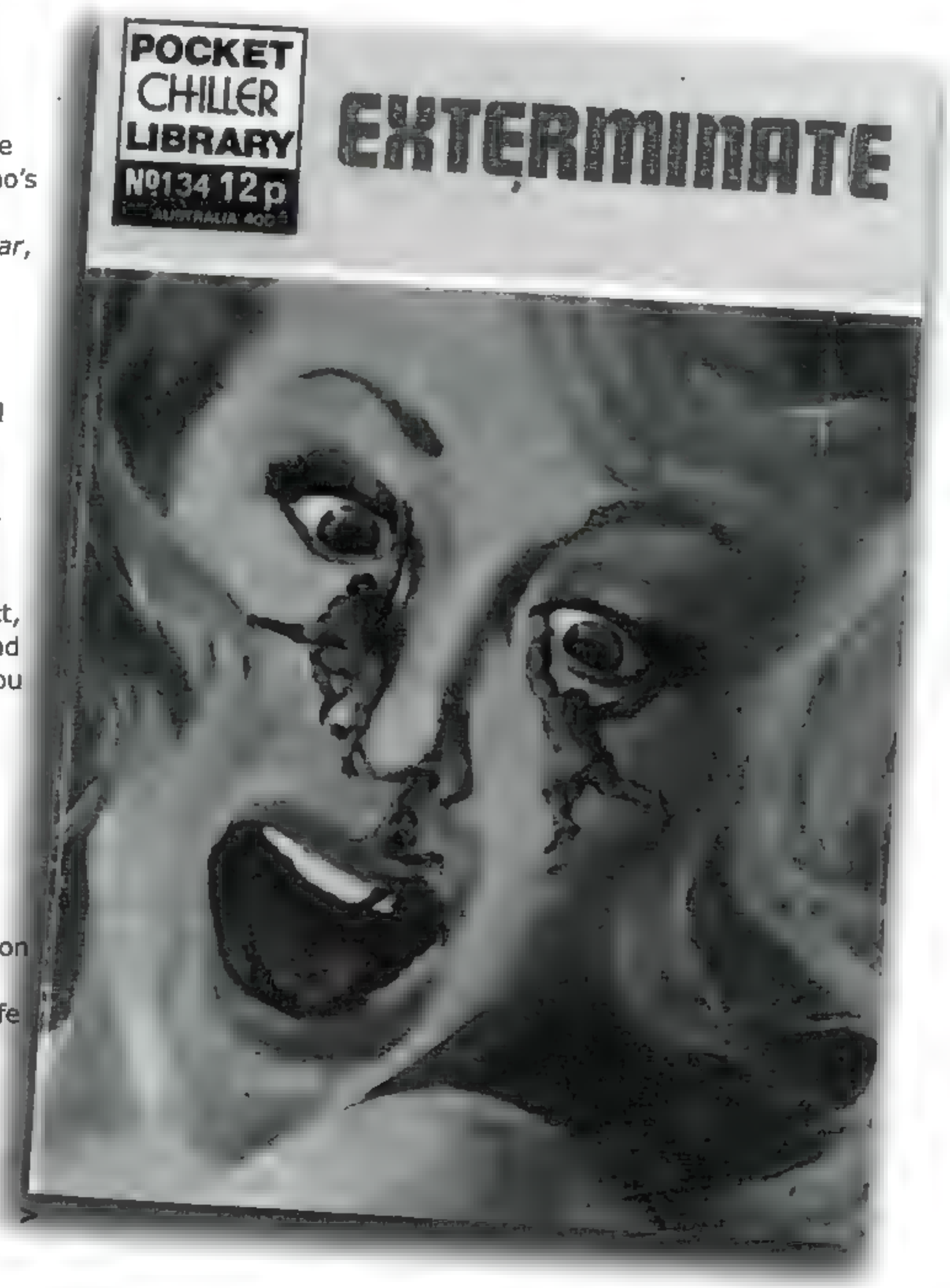
Distribution always seemed to be a problem, too, as there never seemed to be any proper release schedule. Whereas the DC Thomson Commando comics were always easy to collect, Chiller just seemed to be all over the place and it became a case of just grabbing whatever you could get, whenever you could.

SINISTER

Appearing without fanfare, sporting magnificently lurid and ghoulish cover art and containing some of the most spectacularly morbid tales within, *Pocket Chiller* quickly captured the fertile imaginations of a generation of horror-obsessed youngsters.

Early issues seemed almost fixated on real life murderers; 'The Monster of Rillington Place' (Christie), 'The Butcher of Hanover' (Fritz Haarmann) and even Billy the Kid managed a look in. This was a particularly grim telling of the western outlaw's story.

These stories could be quite shocking and I'll >



never forget my Grandmother taking a near fit at the gross sight of a distinguished-looking gent popping a severed leg into a furnace on the cover of the suitably grim 'Doctor Satan'.

EXCELLED

It was however in the straight horror department that *Pocket Chiller* excelled, one example being the absolute classic 'Fear Has a Thousand Eyes' in which an innocent backpacker, after spending the night in a castle in the Carpathian mountains, is convinced he is turning into a vampire bat.

Intelligent and atmospheric, this particular tale was so popular that it was reprinted twice over the next couple of years; first as 'The Vampire of Loban' and then as 'The Curse of Zilhaus'. if you only ever read one *Chiller*, then this should be the one.

CREEPY CLASSICS

Other classics that spring to mind include 'The Hangman', a nasty Victorian tale of a botched hanging of an innocent man and the terrible revenge that is taken on his executioner. Is it the soul of the dead man, or is it all in the mind of the hangman?

'Followers of Satan' was a very grim jungle tale of almost Fulcian zombie horror proportions.

'Exterminate', with its microscopic cannibal army.

'Born to be Evil', an almost indecent gothic complete with a psychotic imbecilic cousin in the cupboard.

For some cool artwork check out 'The Bat', 'The Spider', 'The Monster

The monster of Rillington Place
IT WAS ON THE THIRD OF MARCH 1953, AT NUMBER 10 RILLINGTON PLACE, NORTH KENSINGTON, LONDON...
HELP...!
THAT JOHN REGINALD CHRISTIE COMMITTED THE LAST OF HIS CRIMES. THE VICTIM, A 26-YEAR-OLD SCOTTISH GIRL, RECTORINA MACLENNAN, HAD GONE IN GOOD FAITH TO CHRISTIE'S FLAT FOR SHE WAS IN TROUBLE AND CHRISTIE HAD PROMISED TO HELP HER.
BUT SHE COULD NOT HAVE KNOWN THAT CHRISTIE WAS A MURDERER OR THAT HE HAD PERSUADED HER TO COME TO HIS FLAT NOT TO HELP HER, BUT TO KILL HER.
SOON, OVERCOME BY GAS FUMES, RECTORINA WAS LYING UNCONSCIOUS...
THUS SHE WAS STRANGLED.
DIE....!

CHILLERS RE-TELLING OF THE INFAMOUS REGINALD CHRISTIE MURDERS

Maker' and 'Face in the Fog'. If, however, your taste is for the out and out sick, try 'Killer Doll' or 'To Kill For Kicks'.

GOOD OLD DAYS

It is very difficult in these dark times, where political correctness has been allowed to flourish, to imagine something like this ever seeing the light of day in 21st century Britain.

Looking back, it is quite amazing to consider that *Pocket Chiller* was specifically aimed at kids – but the Seventies was quite a different time from where we are now.

One thing, however, is quite certain and that is the imagination and enthusiasm with which these comics were put together.

Original, entertaining and at times truly unsettling, it is a wonder that for years the Pocket series was all but forgotten. It is fairly obvious now that issues are in short supply and I would be very, very surprised if even the most avid collector had anything near to a complete collection.

There are around 140 issues, although I do not know the exact number (maybe someone can help there).

Anything but a mayfly, the comic lasted well into the mid-seventies before vanishing, but the memory has lingered long and *Pocket Chiller Library* proudly takes its place alongside other class '70s publications such as *World of Horror*, *Legend Horror Classics*, and Dez Skinn's legendary *Monster Mag* and *House of Hammer*. ●

WALTER, FOR GOD'S SAKE! THEY SPREAD AS QUICKLY AS AN OIL STAIN. THEY'LL ...
COME! SEE THEM THROUGH THE MICROSCOPE!
GOOD. I SAID!!
LET ME GO! LET ME GO! THEY'RE EATING EACH OTHER! THEY'RE MAD!!
SHE WAS RIGHT. THOSE STRANGE BEINGS HAD BEGUN TO FIGHT AMONGST THEMSELVES...TO DEVOUR EACH OTHER...
AS THEY ATE THEY REPRODUCED THEMSELVES, FASTER AND FASTER...EVEN FASTER.. AND THEIR NUMBER GREW BY THE SECOND. THERE WERE THOUSANDS, TENS OF THOUSANDS, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS...
I'M DOCTOR BERGEDER OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT...DOCTOR PRAAK, DO YOU RECOGNISE THE 'BODIES?
I KNEW PROFESSOR WINDER VERY WELL.
HORRIBLE...HOW CAN IT BE POSSIBLE?
DO YOU RECOGNISE HIM?
COME BACK HERE YOU CRAZY OLD COOT. COME BACK, I SAY
TOO LATE! TOO LATE! THE CURSE OF ZULHAUS IS UPON YOU!
THROUGH A BANQUETING HALL THEY RACED. AND TIM SAW THE SECRET PASSAGE JUST A FRACTION OF A SECOND TOO LATE...
HA, HA, HA, HA... BEWARE THE CURSE OF ZULHAUS FOR FEAR HAS A THOUSAND EVER-WATCHFUL EYES!

Artist and Anderson super-fan Graham Bleathman has been responsible for making the machines seen in many Anderson series as real as possible through the incredible detail of his cutaway artwork. Brian M Clarke caught up with Graham in his natural habitat – a superfan gathering. Stepping outside the dealer room at the Bristol International Comic Expo, we sidled over to a metal railpost overlooking the crowded and very busy event carpark..

THE Crikey! CHAT

GRAHAM BLEATHMAN

I'm assuming you started off as a comic reader or were you a TV fan first?

Well, it was TV first. My parents weren't that encouraging about me reading comics and I used to end up reading educational magazines which I still like looking at. Things like *Look and Learn* - not *Treasure - Tell Me Why*, *World of Wonder* but especially *Look and Learn*.

I remember old comics like *Topper* and *Beezer* and every now and again the odd copy of *TV21*. But it was the odd copy. Not very many.

Did that make them more desirable?

Very much so. And I must admit I sort of forgot about *TV21* for a couple of years. Then *Countdown* came along which of course started reprinting *TV21* material.

I was in a slightly lucky situation where my dad was a schoolteacher and had access to school jumble sales. While I was collecting *Countdown* pretty much from issue 20 onwards, brand new, week by week, Dad came home from a school jumble sale with a whole pile of *TV21*s!

GRAHAM AT THE BRISTOL COMICS EXPO 2008

I thought, Oh - this stuff's in colour! I'd only seen it previously in black and white. So I started collecting *TV21* and ended up with a huge collection, most of which I still have. Same thing for *Lady Penelope*. When I was at Art College in Exeter, dad rang up one day to say are you interested in *Lady Penelope*...

...and you thought, What kind of question is that?! (Laughter)

I said yes, and he said that he had a complete run from number 50 to the very last issue - do you want them? They are 10p a bundle! And I didn't know what the hell they looked like or anything but, as I was in Exeter and he was in Salisbury, I said "yeah, buy the whole lot and when I come home for the

GRAHAM'S CUTAWAY OF THUNDERBIRD 5 - ARE YOU READING THIS NASA?

weekend I'll sort through them. And it was a complete run except for one issue, 193, which is still missing! After all these years!

From dealers and from shops, I was able to collect the rest of them from number one up to 50 and I've got a complete set except for that issue 193. (*If anyone has a spare copy for poor Graham, get in touch and we'll pass it along – Go-between Ed.*)

So they were the only real comics I collected at the time, basically those based on the TV shows that I love.

I also collected *Look-In*, occasionally. Haven't got that many, by any means, but I've got a fair few.

So which are your formative TV shows?

All the Anderson shows from really *Stingray* onwards – although I soon became familiar with *Fireball XL5* and *Supercar*, those that preceded them.

Dr Who, of course. *The Avengers*. *The Prisoner* and all the ITC shows, to be honest. And all the Anderson shows right up to the present day, I suppose. So they're the ones I've collected in terms of comics, toys, books, magazines – everything I can think of.

And of course all those shows have influenced the work I've done. Which really started in terms of print with *SIG* magazine run by David Nightingale in the 80s. I wrote a couple of the articles, but I was mainly involved in producing the graphics and illustrations for all 20 issues. I followed that with some contributions to *Century 21* and of course *TV21* reprint magazine *Action 21*.

Now at that particular point I was working for a local newspaper - *The Salisbury Journal*...

As a writer? Designer?

As a designer and graphic illustrator doing many of the advertisements. A soul-destroying job doing far too many adverts for garages!

But they had an excellent editor who was very much into doing tourist information >

MAIN PICTURE: REMEMBER WHEN THINGS WERE MUCH SIMPLER? IF YOU WANT TO MOVE THE EMPIRE STATE BUILDING...
(BOTTOM LEFT): GRAHAM'S FIRST ANDERSON BOOK (REPRINTS OF GRAHAM'S FLEETWAY CUTAWAYS, 1993)
(BOTTOM): FIREFLY LEAVES IT'S POD...
THUNDERBIRDS
HD
CROSS-SECTIONS

GRAHAM'S SUPERB CUTAWAY OF TROY TEMPEST'S SUPER-SUB STINGRAY

guides. Not just boring leaflets but big, tabloid format full-colour magazines that were given away with the paper.

He said to me, why don't you do covers? Why don't you do cutaways? Do your own versions of Salisbury cathedral, Salisbury museum, maps of Salisbury. So, I started doing all those.

I'd just left college and much of my degree show was cutaways of Exeter cathedral and things like that. My first professional commission was an illustrated guide to Exeter Maritime Museum. So I ended up doing Salisbury Museum in the Journal.

And did you learn to do cutaways by doing engineering drawing – an exploded diagram of, say, an engine?

No. I had absolutely no technical knowledge whatsoever and still don't. It's all done by eye. I need a lot of reference material or I'll go and ask somebody.

Most of the illustrations I'd done up to that point were architectural illustrations and because I'm very good at perspective and landscape illustration I can visualise easily in 3D. I can work out things like the angles of walls and the layouts of rooms without too much effort..

For technical illustrations I usually get somebody to help me out or I find some reference material - or I crib it from something else.

In terms of the science fiction related technical illustration I tend to ask someone else, or I find books on real aircraft, real engines and extrapolate from there.

So, anyway, I worked for *The Salisbury Journal* doing all these cutaways and guides and things like that, whilst still collecting comics of course, building up my *TV21* collection.

Were you a comic collector or a TV21 *collector?*

TV21. Anderson comics, to be honest. Or Anderson related comics. Most of my comic collection today has a link with the Anderson world, even if it's a fairly tenuous connection. For example I collect *Eagle*, *Express Weekly*, *Look-In*, *Candy*...

Oh yeah! I'd forgotten about Candy...

TV Tornado, which I've got a complete run of now, and related magazines.

Not all of them have a direct Anderson connection, but all the artists who worked for *TV21* seemed to have ended up on these other publications. *Boys World* is another example, and because I liked the artwork from *TV21*, I've ended up liking all the other comics and collecting them. I've never been a fan of much of the IPC material, or DCT comics so I've never really collected *Thunder* or say, *Lion*.

As a collector, does not having issue 193 of Lady Penelope *really annoy you?*

It does! YES! Very much so! I've looked on eBay. I've searched everywhere. It's been quite frustrating. I'm hoping that one day I'll end up with a photocopy of it from somebody. I may go to the British library and get a copy from there. (*Come on, help the guy out – Pleading Ed.*)

This aspect of you working on the newspaper doing cutaways of Salisbury and then helping out with SIG. How did that connection happen?

That's through Dave Nightingale. I can only think that I must have met Dave at the early Fanderson Conventions...

In Leeds?

I didn't go to the very first Fanderson con in Leeds but I went to the second one, in London. That would have been 1982. Actually I came across Dave through somebody else entirely doing fanzines. A chap called Brendan, who seems to have vanished off the face of the earth, introduced me to Dave. Brendan was doing a sort of photocopied fanzine, and I was also doing one – *Magazine of Tomorrow*, which ran for seven issues.

Do you have any copies?

No, I don't. If I do, there're buried in the loft somewhere.

So I met Dave in person at the Fanderson Convention when *SIG* was starting up. We talked and before I knew it I was doing graphics for *SIG* while at the same time working for *The Salisbury Journal*.

So that pushed the snowball down the slope for you...

Indeed. I got my second professional commission which was for the Gerry Anderson exhibition at Edinburgh in 1985.

I did the back cover artwork for their brochure, followed almost immediately by the first Thunderbirds calendar for Dave Nightingale's Engale Marketing in 1986. Then I was made redundant from *The Salisbury Journal* along with around a third of the staff.

I went freelance and the first work I did was for the *Bristol Evening Post* for another editor who was very enthusiastic about television. He got me to do a cutaway of the BBC's *Casualty* studio, which is filmed here in Bristol. So I came up from Salisbury and visited the set two or three times and did lots of drawings from that, took photographs and that became the centre spread of the *Bristol Evening Post*.

That was followed by lots of centre spreads on other subjects, including Thunderbirds and Stingray and Captain Scarlet.

For a local evening newspaper to do a four-page supplement cutaway based on Thunderbirds is unique - as far as I can tell. It's really, really strange - full colour cutaways in a local evening paper!

And that gave me the job with Alan Fennell working on the *Thunderbirds Comic*, published by Fleetway. The initial contact was through a friend of mine, Steve Kyte, an illustrator who had done covers for Channel 5 video sleeves.

Steve did a cover for one of my early fanzines – Telefantasy .

That sounds like, Steve. TV mad.

So it was through Steve that I met Alan Fennell. I showed Alan the Thunderbirds centre spread I did for the *Evening Post*, and he commissioned me to do a cutaway of TB 2, which would be for the second issue. That was

followed immediately by a cutaway of TB1 for the first issue! Deadlines were so far ahead that Alan could work like that.

The TB 2 model never had any innards - so where do the innards come from?

They come from *TV21*. The annuals did cutaways of virtually every Anderson vehicle from Fireball XL5 through to Captain Scarlet. And some appeared in the comics. Some were done by Mike Noble and I think some were done by Eric Eden and possibly Keith Watson.

They wouldn't be working off anything would they?

We don't think they were working off anything in particular- they were just making it up as they went along. We have no real evidence that the Anderson studio supplied technical plans other than general plans and outlines of the shape of the vehicles and of course lots of photographs.

Nobody from the studio sat down and worked out where the engines went, other than the obvious. I followed the rough of the original cutaways.

So your living quarters would be where the original one was shown, but you would add extra details...

That's right. Where things weren't shown in the original I was free to add extra bits myself and to also tidy up any inconsistencies.

Now, of course, there are inconsistencies throughout because it's almost like the TARDIS in the case of some vehicles, where there is actually more inside than there could be.

A good example is the cabin shape of TB2. The windows are almost vertical when you see it from the inside, while from the outside they are at almost 45 degrees or so, because of the slope of the vehicle. You can't do anything about that - you have to wing it and hope no-one notices.

When I did them all again in 2000, these would be the third version of the cutaways – and my second version, I was allowed to add even more detail and I was asked to do it on a sort of Dorling Kindersley *Star Wars* cross section style.

Anyway I was working for Alan Fennell for four years doing cutaways for Thunderbirds, Stingray, Joe 90 and Captain Scarlet. I also sneaked in a Fireball cutaway as well, which appeared in an issue of the *Thunderbirds Comic*.

I ended up doing about 75 cutaways in full colour, painted in gouache with ink work added on top and white Letraset lines to show where the pieces were cut from.

I did a lot of the covers for the comic as well and a few 'comic strips'. They weren't comic strip stories as such; they were showing launch sequences of the vehicles.

I also provided many illustrations for a lot of Anderson-related merchandise during this period too, some of which was arranged through Alan Fennell. I did things like lunch boxes, jigsaw puzzles, board games, greetings cards (for *Space Precinct*), and quite a few of the Fleetway cutaways were reprinted in national papers like the *Sunday Times* and *Daily Mirror*.

When that eventually all fell through, as these things do, I worked very briefly on *Space Precinct* comic. That was for Manga Entertainment, the publishing company of *Manga Mania Magazine*. For some reason they had the licence to do a *Space Precinct* comic, which was quite bizarre but there you go!

I ended up doing several cutaways, some not published because the magazine only lasted six issues. I did about 10 of them. I never had the artwork back so I've no idea what happened to them.

And you worked on the Grandream publications...

Well the GD stuff was actually reprinted. I have to give Alan his due – he was very good at doing deals. And if any of my artwork was reprinted in any other publication; book, comic, annual I got half my original fee for the reprint - which was amazing for those particular times.

So most of the stuff for GD was reprint. In fact other than the *Space Precinct Annual* that I did for you, I don't think I did anything new. (*Ed note: Brian Clarke was editorial director of Newsstand Services and hired Graham to work on SP.*)

Everything you do is non-storytelling. Would you like to do a comic strip?

I did do a comic strip for *SIG* which had very mixed reaction called 'AC21' - which stood for 'Adventure in the 21st century' - and we really made a bit of a mistake here. 'AC21' originated as a fanzine that I published with the strip's writer, Graham Bassett. It was a *TV21* influenced story about the same universe that the shows were set in, but we had to do it so we didn't actually mention the shows themselves for copyright purposes! We thought we'd better play it safe!

As an aside to that, have you seen Antarctica Press The Agents? *That has all the Anderson stuff and more – Bond, Avengers...*

I've got a couple of issues but I don't know how many they did. I certainly have a couple.

There's a collection out now that has issues one to six...

I certainly remember the heavy Anderson references...

Was yours similar to that?

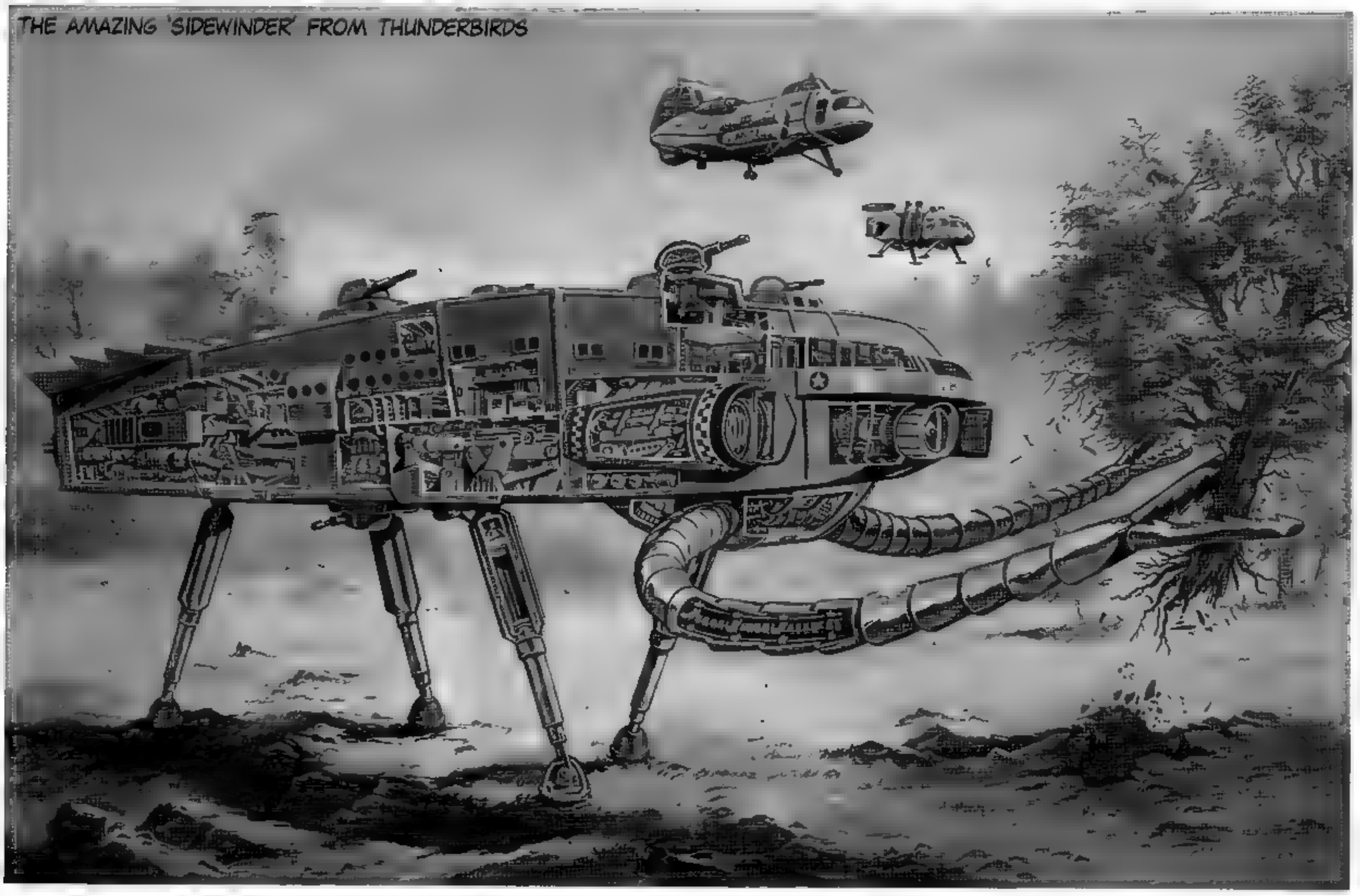
In a sense. Ours was a straightforward story. It wasn't a mickeytake or anything like that. We did mention things like the World Space Patrol and World Aquanaut Security Patrol, but we were fairly careful not to mention too much about individual characters such as Troy Tempest and the others.

We also created a concept about a World Church, which was a highly political organisation, that had taken over the world government about ten or 20 years after the events in *TV21*.

An Opus Dei kind of thing ..

That's correct – but that was a bit of a mistake. You see, it seemed to work quite well for the two fanzines we did but when Dave >

THE AMAZING 'SIDEWINDER' FROM THUNDERBIRDS



(ABOVE): A SPECTRUM HELICOPTER (BELOW): THUNDERBIRDS (OR MAYBE GRAHAM) TURNING JAPANESE.

Nightingale said would you like to transfer the strip to *SIG*, it did get the wrath of readers. They weren't very happy with that!

We should have kept to a more straightforward Gerry Anderson story. Under the licence *SIG* had to do pure Anderson content.

The only other major comic strip that I've done was also written by Graeme Bassett, and that the four issue mini-series called *Sentinel*, published by Harrier Comics in the late 80s. It was co-illustrated by the late Art (Arthur) Wetherell, and as far as I can tell, it was well received. It was about a futuristic newspaper; *TV21*-like, but not set in the Anderson universe!

I'm just thinking through some samples of your artwork - your figures tend to be somebody sat down. Which is ironic because you were working on Anderson stuff and he had the same issue with movement, which is why they gave everyone moving chairs!

Yes! In a sense the characters were wooden anyway! So that's very true!

I was also asked to do a set of collectors plates for Captain Scarlet which involved figure work of all the characters in action. I did one, which I'm quite proud of, most of the characters were stood looking toward you with a montage of vehicles above their heads, obviously within the rim of a circular plate.

As for the Hamilton collection, they advertised in the *Daily Mirror*, but it didn't get enough people wanting to buy it, so the whole project fell through. It would have a most lucrative exercise had it gone ahead. They would have wanted nine plates in total. One for each Captain, and one for each Angel in a dynamic pose with their appropriate vehicle next to them. That would have been a really nice thing to do.

Did you have any involvement with the Thunderbirds *movie?*

Not really. I was planning to do a cutaway book on the movie, having done two *Thunderbirds*-related books for Carlton in 2000; the first on *Thunderbirds* itself and the second covering the other Supermarionation shows. So I approached Dorling Kindersley about this and they were initially quite enthusiastic. They took me out to lunch, we had a good chat about what we were going to do and then we went along to the licensing office of Universal.

We looked through the script and some of the pre-production drawings that had been done at that particular point. It was almost decided there and then not to go ahead. The editors at DK thought the movie was going to be a bit of a flop; they didn't think much of the vehicles or the characters or the story - we read pretty much the entire script before anyone else...

Was that a thrill?

No. (Laughter.) We didn't have much time, so we skimmed through it. I made a few sketches of some of the vehicles. It was not a good script, it didn't impress us at all.

I did however, do some hand drawn trading cards for Cards Inc based on the movie. These were inserted randomly into packs of five or six printed cards. I did a couple of hundred of those. They've appeared on eBay and seem to have sold for quite a lot of money, which is quite nice in a sense. But that was it; I had no involvement in the movie beyond those cards and that near miss, with DK.

And the Carlton TV CGI New Captain Scarlet?

No involvement in that, although but I did make an attempt to do cutaways for the *Captain Scarlet Comic*. William Potter, the editor, was quite enthusiastic about it; it was a case of "Good idea, we'll be in touch..." Six issues later, the magazine collapsed. So nothing happened. I really feel sorry for Gerry Anderson because the CGI Captain Scarlet was so badly treated by the TV companies.

It's a beautiful show. Was it Phil Ford who wrote quite a number of the episodes? There's some terrifically complex stories in there. He was also story editor.

Yes, he was. And he did a lot of TV drama - he also wrote for *Coronation Street* and *Bad Girls*. He wrote quite a few of those.

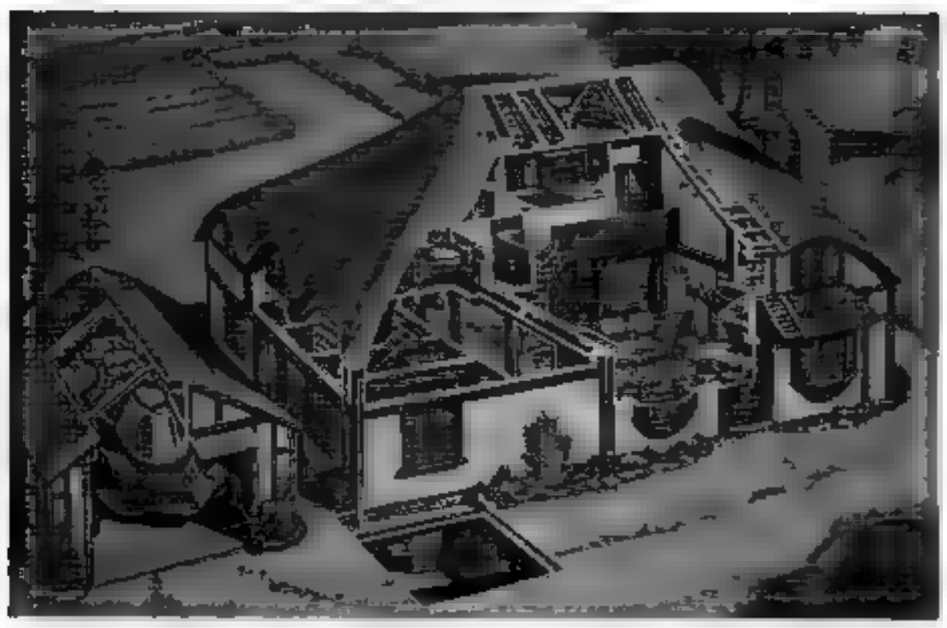
His were very human stories...

They were. And given that the stories were only 23 minutes long I think they did a good job. He was the main writer. But it was treated so badly by ITV. It was broadcast during *Ministry of Mayhem* on a Saturday morning, and it was heavily edited with the titles often removed. Unsurprisingly therefore, it sank without a trace even though there was a fair bit of merchandise relating to toys etc, plus a few books. That's about as far as it got.

In the mid-1990s my relationship with the Gerry Anderson universe tailed off a bit after the demise of *Space Precinct*. But since then, *Thunderbirds* came back on TV yet again, which was when I did the two or three books for Carlton; *Thunderbirds FAB Cross-sections* and *Supermarionation Cross-sections* and also a book of *TV21* reprints from 'Thunderbirds'.

The one with Mr. Steelman!

Yes. *Thunderbirds Classic Comic Strips From TV21* - what a title to remember! How we got



(ABOVE): THE HOME OF PROFESSOR IAN MCCLAINE (INVENTOR OF THE BIG RAT), JOE 90'S ADOPTIVE FATHER AND COMPUTER EXPERT.

away with that I don't know because of the various copyright issues in trying to get *TV21* material reprinted - there are so many people wanting a royalty! I'm still a bit mystified how Carlton got away with publishing the book... and avoiding paying multiple royalties to more than three people because there are quite a few parties who would want a cut.

You don't think it was as simple as they never told anyone!

I think it might have been like that! I get the feeling that Express Newspapers own the rights to the artwork - I don't think they were very happy about it but that is only rumour and hearsay!

That's the physical artwork..

Yeah. IPC own the rights to the title *TV21*. ITC Entertainment via Granada Ventures own the rights to the series themselves so, again, I think you have to consider all those people that might want a royalty.

Of course Carlton books at that particular time was part of Carlton TV and therefore Granada Ventures so that was a little bit easier, but these days I think they've split. They're not part of Granada Ventures who own the Anderson back catalogue effectively. It's a shame because I've been trying since 1988 to get a *TV21* book published. I've approached a number of publishers.

What kind of project?

A history of *TV21* and its related magazines. In fact it's written and complete. It was going to be published originally by Hawk Books in a similar vein to their wonderful *Dan Dare Dossier*. It would have reprinted a couple of strips from *TV21*, plus the full history, and featuring unpublished material like page mock-ups which we managed to get hold of and photograph.

Of late, there have been a lot of books that say 'not authorised' or 'unofficial'. Is that an approach to take?

I don't think that's worth the paper it's not written on!

I wouldn't want to risk it with someone like Granada. They're a big company and if you start doing "unofficial" guides.. well, I wouldn't want to risk the wrath of them coming down on me or my publisher

Is it not worth spending £200 getting a copyright lawyer to go over it?

It possibly might be. It's not something I know about to be honest.

It just sounds such a terrific project!

It does and I would love to do it because it's effectively written, although it would need updating. It was co-written by Graham Bassett and if we did it again we'd probably get Sam Denham in as well, who co-edited the Classic TB Comic Strips book. So that's the one ambition left - to try and get that book done. And it's frustrating when there are "Best of Look-ins" and some of them are published by imprints of Carlton books, which is even more frustrating.

I did approach them again on the lines of; "Lets get on and do a *TV21* book" but they're not overly keen and they said that the Classic TB Strips didn't sell that well, although I suspect it sold in respectable numbers. Its a few years ago!

They didn't dismiss the idea out of hand, however and were initially enthusiastic about doing a book until they got someone to look into the copyright and realised they were still going to have to shell out payments to several companies. And this is before paying Graeme and me to produce it. It'll get done one day - probably by somebody else! That doesn't worry me - as long as somebody does it.

Taking you back to the first commission that was related to Anderson.

That was the back cover of the Edinburgh exhibition programme 1985/6, followed almost immed ately by the first Thunderbirds calendar published by Dave Nightingale.

Well, thinking back to that; can you remember, first of all, how excited you were and then, how daunting it was?

I must admit it was quite an honour and a privilege to do those first two commissions and I have Steve Kyte to thank really because he was initially asked to do the Edinburgh exhibition back cover as well. He only had time to do one and so he did the front cover...

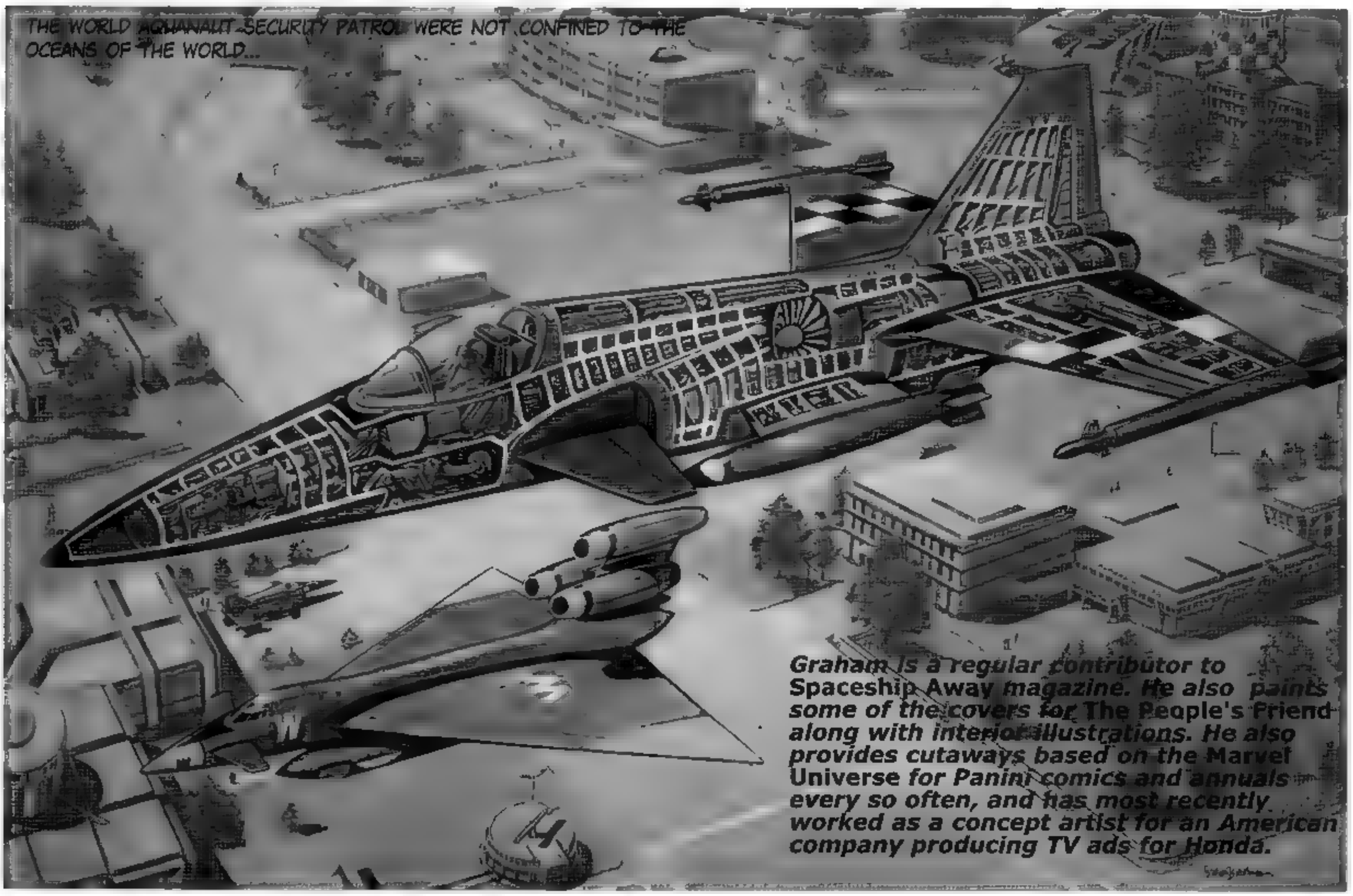
The glory one!

Yes! There was at that point a little bit of rivalry between us! Friendly rivalry – we actually get on very well. He said, do you want to do the back cover and I ended up doing a picture of the Fireflash airliner crashing near Edinburgh castle. I must admit that although there was a feeling of "it's been handed down to me", I was still really, really thrilled to do them.

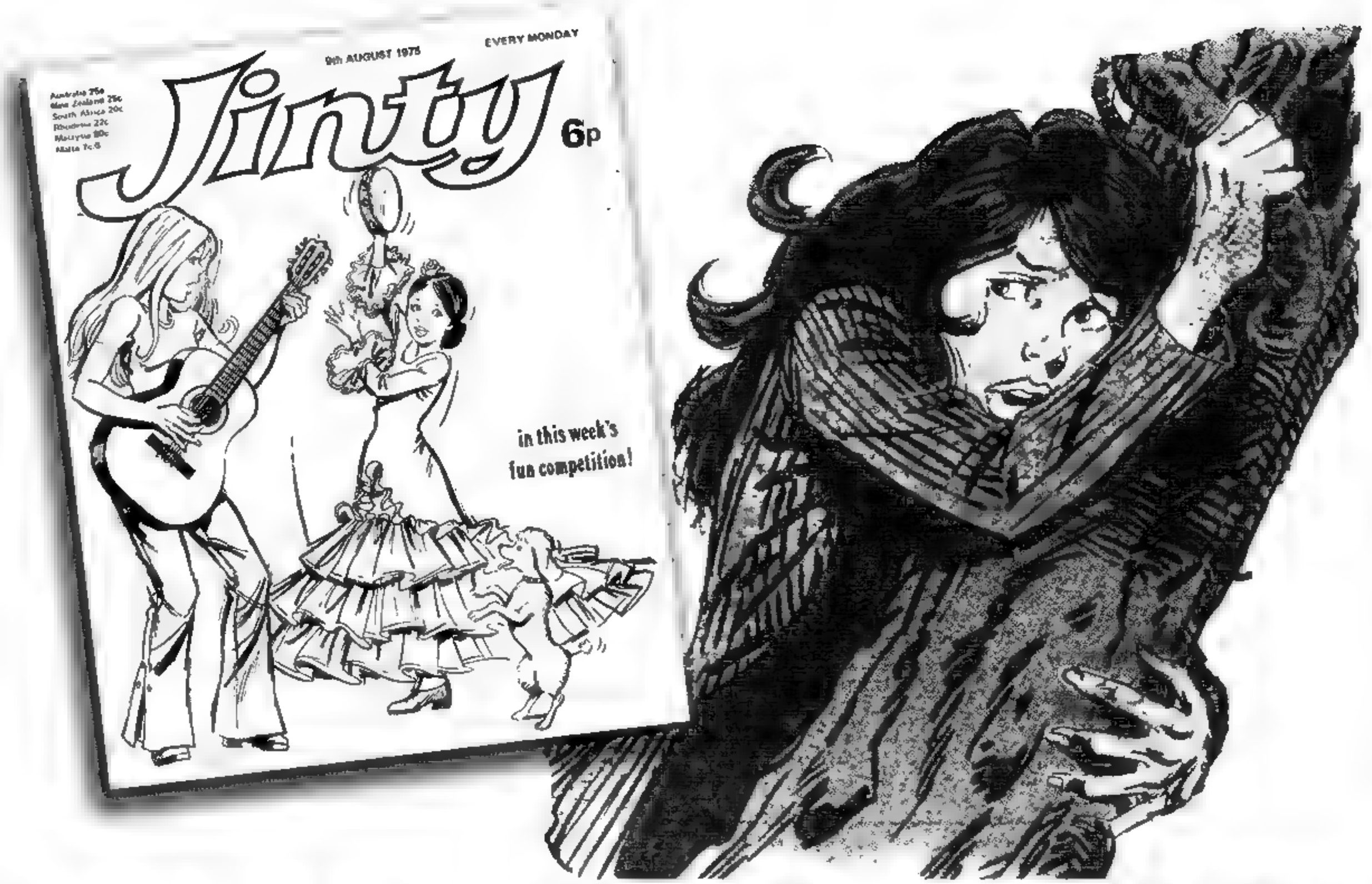
And that was how it started really.

Graham, it's been great talking with you and I wish you all the very best with your future projects – and do whatever you can to get your TV21 Project out.

I will!



Graham is a regular contributor to Spaceship Away magazine. He also paints some of the covers for The People's Friend along with interior illustrations. He also provides cutaways based on the Marvel Universe for Panini comics and annuals every so often, and has most recently worked as a concept artist for an American company producing TV ads for Honda.



MY COMICY SATURDAY

BY JENNI SCOTT

Jinty
7p
The Invasion of the Insects starts...
ordered by CREEPY CRAWLER
TO SAVE HER MOTHER
Rowan must beat the spell of the spinning wheel!

My comics-buying experiences were pretty varied, for a simple reason – my dad worked for the British Council when I was growing up, so we moved around a fair bit.

As a result, while my Derbyshire-based grandparents kept up a standing order at the local newsagents for *Jinty* (for me) and *Whizzer & Chips* (for my brother), I also kept a sharp eye out for whatever was available in Mexico, or our daytrips to the United States, or later on in Brazil. As a result, I never got the issue that many women of my age got stuck on: the sudden lack of comics to buy after you'd grown out of the weekly girls' story paper, or the expected transition to *Just Seventeen* or other make-up tip mags.

BRITISH COMICS - AT A DISTANCE

My sister first started getting *Jinty*, in fact, and I sort of inherited her standing order once she lost interest, or perhaps was deemed to lose interest. There's five years age difference between us, so she might indeed have stopped reading it once she hit twelve or thirteen and started to go to boarding school in England, or it might have been subtly hinted to her that she was a bit big for this now, and here's little Jenny who loves reading them...

Whatever the exact way of it, I remember that when people came over to visit us in Mexico, whether it was Sandy coming home for the holidays or my grandparents coming over to see us all, part of the excitement for everyone was the Mars Bars

but the really big part of the excitement for me was the pile of comics they brought over.

I'd read and re-read the ones I had, and as a new pile was added to the existing lot and read in the first flush of newness, I'd start from the beginning again and re-read once more.

Sometimes we'd go back to the UK, in between Dad's jobs, and then once again a big pile of comics would be waiting. It was almost better to get them like that – gobbling up a whole set of parallel stories at once, perhaps even getting both the start and the finish of some stories. But you can imagine the frustration of getting to the end of the current lump – how long would it be before I could find out what happened to the girl who'd dug up some Viking clay statues that had then come alive?

Some of the answers came to me in dreams. Not the real outcomes of the stories, of course, but I'd read the stories so thoroughly and so often that I could bring panels to life from the patterns in the ceiling and would dream of being attacked by the mystical villains, protected in turn by a circle of the good characters.

Epona the Horse Goddess reared above my bed to stop the evil witch Miss Marvell, in a combination never planned by the creators of those stories.

American comics - in their native land (more or less)

At the same time, I was reading the local comics too. Well, I say local - I don't remember reading all that many Mexican comics. I was attending an American school, and my Spanish was less good than it might have been as a result, and much of my reading was English-language.

Luckily for me, my mum ran a local English-language bookshop, which amongst other things sold comics. I used to sit by the comics shelves reading that month's set (probably making a nuisance of myself under everyone's feet), and galloping through a number of classic Marvel storylines as a result.

My memories from that time include the Avengers story with the unpronounceable Chthon who possessed the Scarlet Witch and fought the rest of the team (beautiful John Byrne art). Also a Kirby Thor story retelling the story of Ragnarok and the predicted rebirth of man once the world had been remade in the aftermath of that apocalypse.

I also read *Heavy Metal*, which was not something I was supposed to do at that tender age - I was still well under ten - and while no doubt a certain amount of it went straight over my head, I do remember images of nudity, torture, and mutilation quite clearly. So they obviously stuck in my head quite thoroughly.

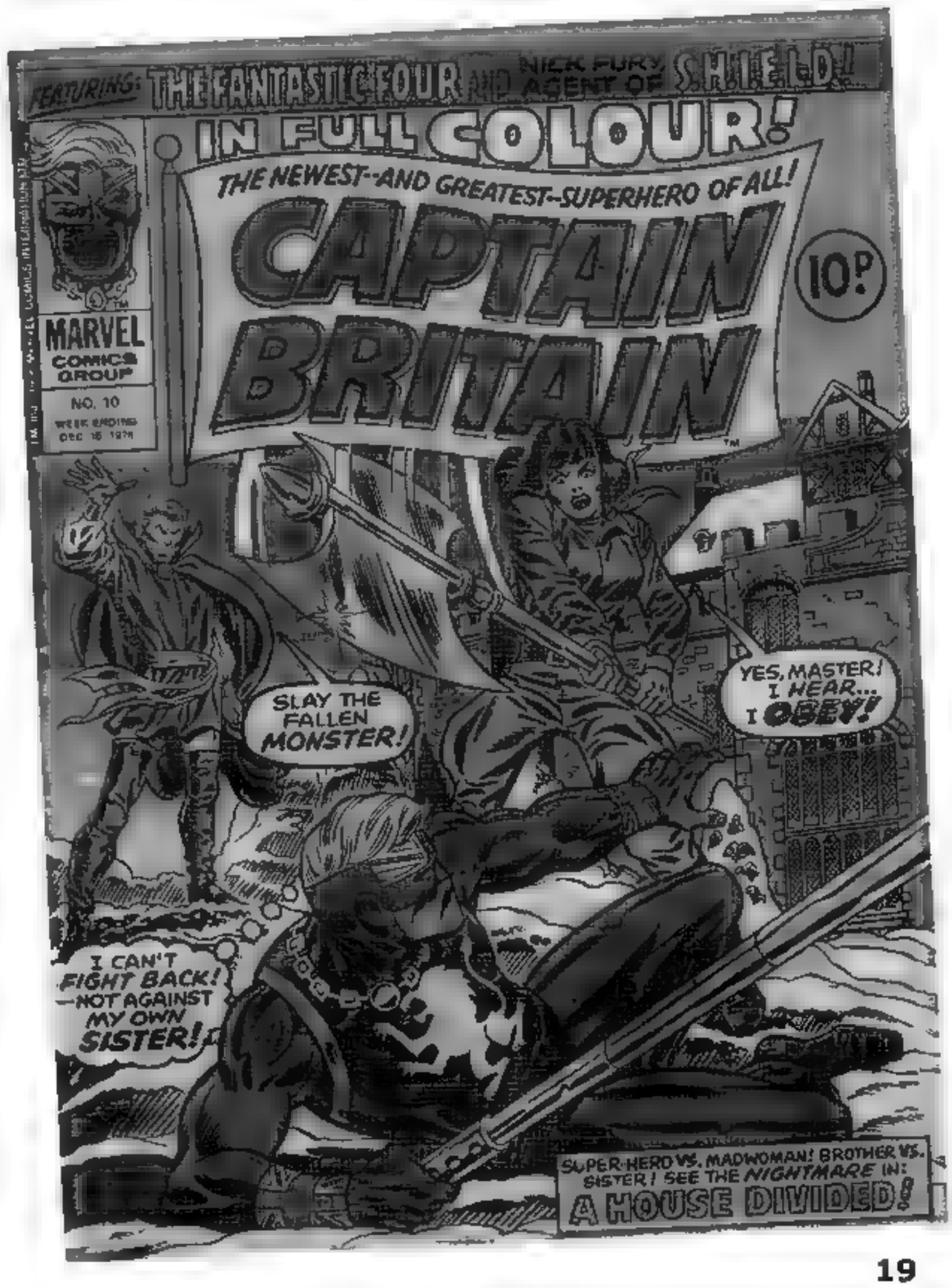
I think the stuff that caused me much more in the way of nightmares were the stories, probably not in Heavy Metal itself, that riffed on the popularity of the Jaws film and caused me to wake up screaming with dreams of hands being nibbled off by sharks. Never did me any harm though, twitch twitch...

Comics in Brazil and in Britain

When I was ten, we moved to Brazil, and at the age of eleven, I started boarding school in Yorkshire (though half-terms and suchlike were spent in Glossop, where >

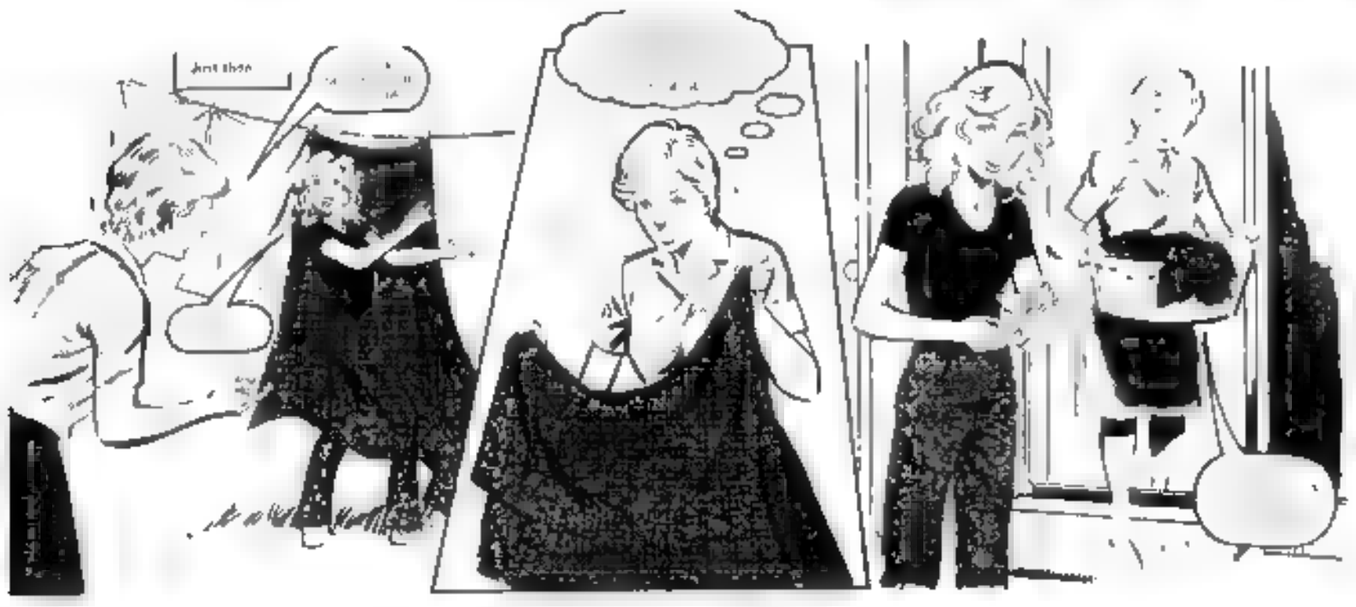
I KNOW NOT... I CARE NOT... WHAT PUNY DEFENSES AWAIT ME!
WHILE THEY PREPARE FOR ME ABOVE GROUND...
MANDOG WILL TUNNEL BELOW!
TO ONE WITH THE POWER OF A BILLION BILLION BEINGS... THE HARDEST ROCK IS NO MORE AN OBSTACLE THAN THE EMPTY AIR ITSELF!
MANDOG HATH OUTSTRIPPED US! HE IS ALMOST AT THE GOLDEN GATES!
LIKE UNTO A MONSTROUS MOLE, HE DOTH SPEED BENEATH THE GROUND!
FLY THEN, THUNDER GOD! NONE BUT THEE CANST CATCH HIM!
AY! BUT THIS TIME THOR MUST FLY ALONE!
I DARE NOT CHECK MY SPEED WITH THINE ADDED WEIGHT!
BUT WE SHALL FOLLOW... CLOSE BEHIND!
HOW FARETH THE FIEND, GRIM HOGUN?
HIS SCENT HATH ALMOST DIED AWAY!
THEN I MUST FLY... FORTHWITH!!
MAY THE EYES OF ASGARD BE UPON THEE!

(ABOVE) THOR 157 (ART BY JACK KIRBY)
(BELOW) CAPTAIN BRITAIN (ART BY LARRY LEIBER)


FEATURING: THE FANTASTIC FOUR AND NICK FURY, AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D.!
IN FULL COLOUR!
THE NEWEST--AND GREATEST--SUPERHERO OF ALL!
CAPTAIN BRITAIN
10P
MARVEL COMICS GROUP
NO. 10
SLAY THE FALLEN MONSTER!
YES, MASTER! I HEAR... I OBEY!
I CAN'T FIGHT BACK! —NOT AGAINST MY OWN SISTER!
SUPER-HERO VS. MADWOMAN! BROTHER VS. SISTER! SEE THE NIGHTMARE IN: A HOUSE DIVIDED!

HEADS UP, BUB! WOLVERINE'S COMIN' AT'CHA!
HUH?!? THE MANIACS COMING THROUGH THE WINDOW! I COME HERE LOOKING FOR HELP, AND END UP FIGHTING FOR MY LIFE!

(ABOVE AND RIGHT) JOHN BYRNE'S WOLVERINE (BELOW) EXAMPLES FROM JINTY & TAMMY



FATHER, WHY WAS GRAN SO UPSET ABOUT MY HAIR? I OVERHEARD YOU TELLING HER YOU UNDERSTOOD THE REASON, SO PLEASE EXPLAIN.
IT'S NOTHING FOR YOU TO WORRY ABOUT. WHEN GRANS UP AND ABOUT AGAIN YOU'LL FIND IT'S ALL PAST HISTORY!
WE NEED GRAN, TAMSIN! I KNOW YOU'RE SAFE WITH HER WHILE I'M AT SEA. TRY TO FORGIVE AND FORGET WHAT HAPPENED.
THERE'S A MYSTERY SOMETHING HE'S KEEPING FROM ME! I'LL FIND OUT SOMEHOW
HER FIRST DAY BACK AT SCHOOL
HI, TAMI! YOU'RE BACK IN TIME TO SEE THE SCHOOL OPTICIAN WE EACH HAD A NOTE TO SAY HE WAS COMING BUT I SUPPOSE YOU DIDN'T GET ONE AS YOU WERE AWAY
WHEN THE OPTICIAN'S VISITED SCHOOL BEFORE, GRAN'S ALWAYS KEPT ME AWAY SHE BUYS MY SPECTACLES PRIVATELY
DON'T GET ME WRONG, TAMI! I DON'T LIKE TO BE NOSY, BUT ARE YOU SURE THEY'RE NOT PLAIN GLASS?
ARE YOU NEXT FOR YOUR EYE TEST DEAR?
A CB T NO E O P C
WE MIDGEY AT SPECS! NOT A DISTINCTION I'D WEAR THEM WHAT IF ELLEN'S RIGHT? IT'LL MEAN GRAN'S MADE ME WEAR THEM FOR NO REASON AT ALL!
SOON
NO PROBLEMS WITH YOUR EYES! LUCKY GIRL!
YOU WANT TO GET THE OPTICIAN TO WEAR GLASSES OR THINK YOU?
T N O E O P C
YOU WERE RIGHT ELLEN! ANY ON EARTH DIDN'T I REALISE? ALL THESE YEARS GRANS MADE ME WEAR THE UGLIEST SPECS SHE COULD FIND SO I'D LOOK PLAIN AND ORDINARY. EVEN FATHER CAN'T EXPECT ME TO FORGIVE HER FOR THIS!

TAMSIN PLANS A SHOW-DOWN NEXT WEEK – BUT ONLY FINDS THE MYSTERY DEEPENS!

my grandparents lived). Mum no longer worked in an English-language bookshop and, while I still had my pile of *Jintys* to re-read and add to. (Not for that long - it was around this time that Mum persuaded me to give my *Jintys* away to local deserving kids, in the way of parents across the globe...)

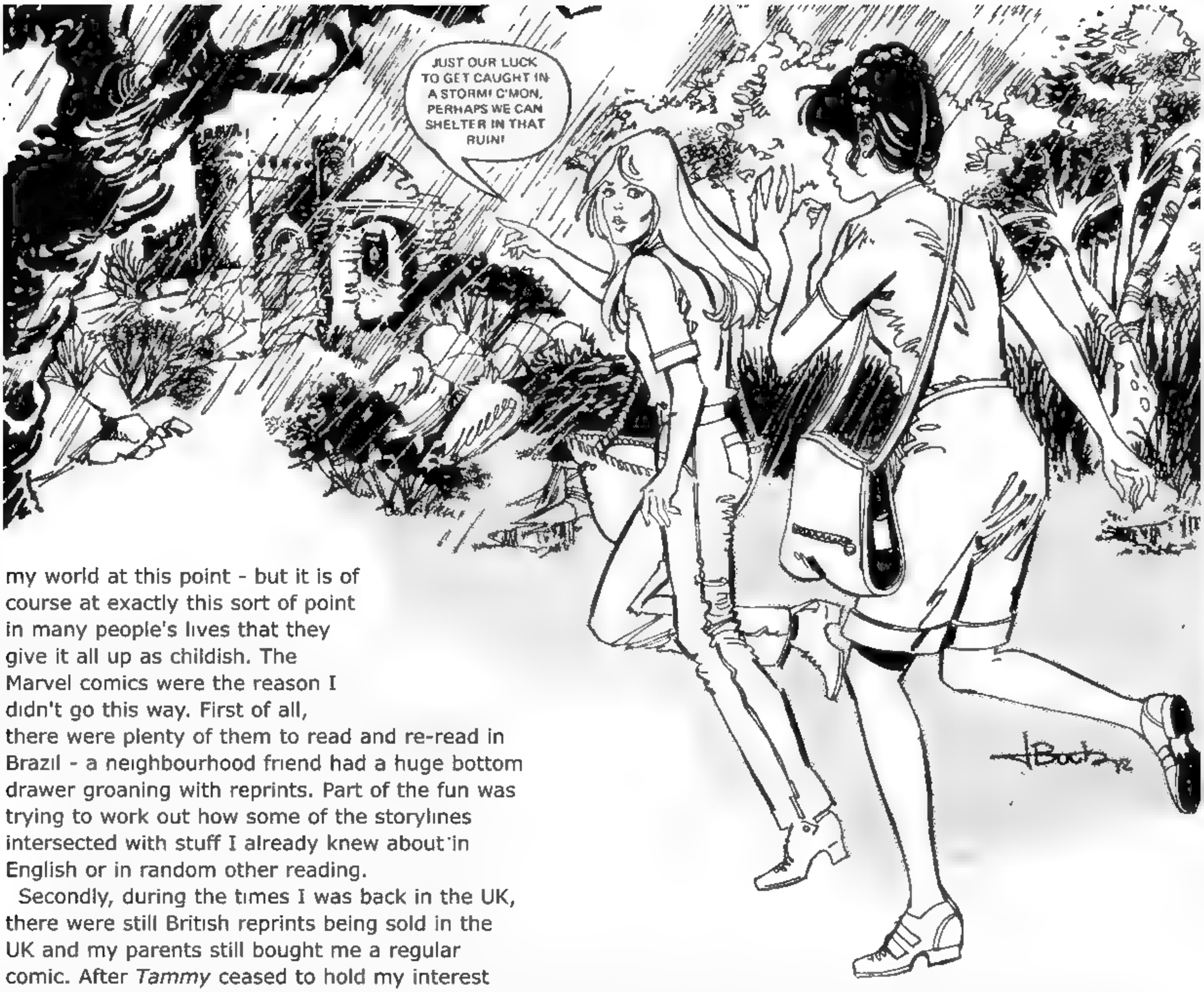
I took much more interest in the local publications this time round.

This was partly because it was very easy for me to come across them - many Disney comics were published in translation, and some of them (such as *Zé Carioca*) were titles created specifically for the Brazilian market. Superhero stories were thinner on the ground, though one title (*Heróis da TV*) was an anthology of a number of Marvel stories, reprinted in a smaller format (requiring relettering with substantially less text per word balloon, which impaired the stories rather).

In addition, there were a whole slew of locally-originated titles - primarily those created by Mauricio de Sousa (www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mauricio_de_Sousa, a local Disney figure. Though later on I would find a healthy alternative and adult comic scene too.

Comics got me moving from speaking Spanish only moderately well to speaking and reading Portuguese properly. Apart from the inspired daftness of the stories, I have a soft spot for Donald Duck's world for that reason - Unca Scrooge in my mind is always Tio Patinhas, the Beagle Brothers are Os Irmãos Metralha, Magica De Spell is Maga Patalógika, and so forth...

You've got the impression by now that comics were a pretty entrenched part of



my world at this point - but it is of course at exactly this sort of point in many people's lives that they give it all up as childish. The Marvel comics were the reason I didn't go this way. First of all, there were plenty of them to read and re-read in Brazil - a neighbourhood friend had a huge bottom drawer groaning with reprints. Part of the fun was trying to work out how some of the storylines intersected with stuff I already knew about in English or in random other reading.

Secondly, during the times I was back in the UK, there were still British reprints being sold in the UK and my parents still bought me a regular comic. After *Tammy* ceased to hold my interest (*Jinty* having merged insensibly into it, leaving only 'Pam of Pond Hill' as a sign it was ever there), the Marvel UK weekly reprints of The Original X-Men, Kirby art and all, caught me on the hook of my love of those merry mutants. Oh, to have suddenly found myself with mutant powers at puberty! It still seemed almost in my grasp at that time.

When that also merged and merged again (first with Thor and then with Spider-Man), the 1980's Mighty World of Marvel was the next step. It wasn't the X-Men, but it did have Wolverine, and Alan Moore writing 'Captain Britain' (confusingly to me as I'd started part-way through).

In addition to the British reprints, you could even sometimes find individual US comics on the shelves in newsagents. I remember picking up *New Mutants* number 15, the first issue of it I'd seen, though then there was not a sausage until maybe number 21 or so - by which time it was a different storyline, different artist, and quite different vibe.

It was quite something, though, spotting in a dusty corner a title you'd never heard of, clearly related to something you had already loved for some years by then, and promising a whole stream of stories to be caught up in.

The moment that I became forever a comics fan, though, was probably at around fourteen or fifteen, when I discovered the first shop I knew of that sold comics not as an incidental side-line, but as back-issues, in bulk, for cheap.

This paragon of shops was the Paramount Book Exchange on Shudehill, Manchester. I was in the car with Mum and Dad and we drove past an unexciting-looking shop front that nevertheless caught my eye because somewhere on its front it said the magic word 'comics'. I made them stop the car so I could get out and find where it was, did it really say that magic word, did it really mean it?

It did, but I couldn't go in at that point, having promised my parents I'd be back at the car in a few minutes. I think the rest of that car journey must have passed in bliss and agony as I wished I could have gone in properly and looked, imagined what I'd find in there, worried if I would be able to find it again...

Glossop was only half an hour away by train, and I was old enough to go by myself on Saturdays. It must have been holidays and in between Dad's postings to Brazil - and at the earliest opportunity off I went, to sniff out this promised land from memorised shop frontage and a good bump of locality.

I found it and never looked back. ●

"One of the best-known figures in English fiction." That was how George Orwell described Billy Bunter, in a magazine article about boys' weeklies in 1940. "Just you try to make a character as recognisable as Billy Bunter", remarked Bunter's creator, Frank Richards, reflecting on his most famous creation.

BILLY BUNTER BUMPER BIRTHDAY BASH!

BY STEPHEN POPPITT

A WELL-FILLED HAMPER ROUSES THE FAT OWL'S GREED—SO HE GETS RID OF QUELCHY AT VERY HIGH SPEED!
BILLY BUNTER
THE HEAVYWEIGHT CHUMP OF GREYFRIARS
THE BOUNDER'S WAY!
Powerful Long Complete School Story Inside.
The Magnet 2d Library
Complete School Stories.
BUNTER ASKS FOR IT—AND GETS IT!

February 15, 1908 saw the publication of the very first issue of The Magnet, a weekly story paper for boys. It's distinction, a century later, is that it featured the first ever appearance of the fat schoolboy Billy Bunter. This year accordingly marks his one hundredth birthday.

Bunter's popularity was such that the publishers advertised The Magnet as "Billy Bunter's Own Paper", for by the time it finally ceased publication thirty two years later, due to paper shortages in World War Two, Bunter had become one of the most famous characters in children's literature.

The stories were written by Charles Hamilton, writing under the pseudonym Frank Richards. In a writing career which spanned more than 60 years, Hamilton wrote in excess of sixty million words, under many different pen names. Not only as Frank Richards, but also as Hilda Richards (who was supposedly Frank's sister), Martin Clifford, Owen Conquest and many others; often contributing stories to two or three different publications each week.

He had been writing boys' fiction for 14 years before creating the famous buffoon. He first proposed a character called Bunter in 1900, but his publisher turned the idea down, and it was a further eight years before he was able to include Bunter in a published story, in the first ever edition of a brand new story paper.

The Magnet began life as a weekly, costing just half a penny in old money for a twenty page story paper for boys. A story paper, mind you, not a comic. The Magnet was filled with text stories, supplemented by quarter-page or half-page illustrations. It was published continuously by Amalgamated Press every week from 1908 until 1940.

For the Bunter stories in The Magnet, Hamilton created Greyfriars School. He populated it with characters such as Bunter's severe form master, Henry Samuel Quelch, whom Bunter described as "a beast, but a just beast"; and with evergreen schoolboys Harry Wharton, Herbert Vernon-Smith, and Lord Mauleverer.

And, of course, he created the portly, bespectacled William George Bunter, the "fat owl of the Remove". Billy Bunter: forever in trouble for tuck-raiding, forever expecting a Postal Order.

The stories were essentially contemporary to the times in which they were written. So stories published during the First World War featured Zeppelin raids, and stories published at the outbreak of the Second World War featured Nazi spies. But mostly the stories were about Greyfriars School itself.

Greyfriars was a public school, with a setting not unlike that depicted in the novel Tom Brown's Schooldays. Greyfriars had all the trappings of a Victorian public school: Masters who wore academic gowns in class, and who taught Latin and Classics. The halls were patrolled by prefects who handed out six-of-the-best. Bunter's fellow schoolboys included a fair few sons of the aristocracy, mingled in among the sons of wealthy upper-middle-class stockbrokers, solicitors and bank managers.

As a public school, Greyfriars took boys from eleven or twelve in the second form to sixteen or seventeen in the sixth form. Bunter was forever in the lower fourth form, known as the 'Remove'.

The stories were gloriously out-of-date even when they were written. For the fictional world of Greyfriars presented in them never altered significantly from its origins in 1908. Hamilton himself had never attended a public school. His writings were based on what he had read about that world, principally in Tom Brown's Schooldays and in Kipling's Stalky and Co. Indeed, Kipling's short stories of Stalky had a strong echo at Greyfriars, where the stories revolved mainly around the activities of Harry Wharton and Co.

As leaders of their form, they excelled at cricket and football, and they despised the shadier members of the form, such as Herbert Vernon-Smith, who smoked, gambled on the gee-gees, or surreptitiously frequented local pubs such as The Three Fishers.

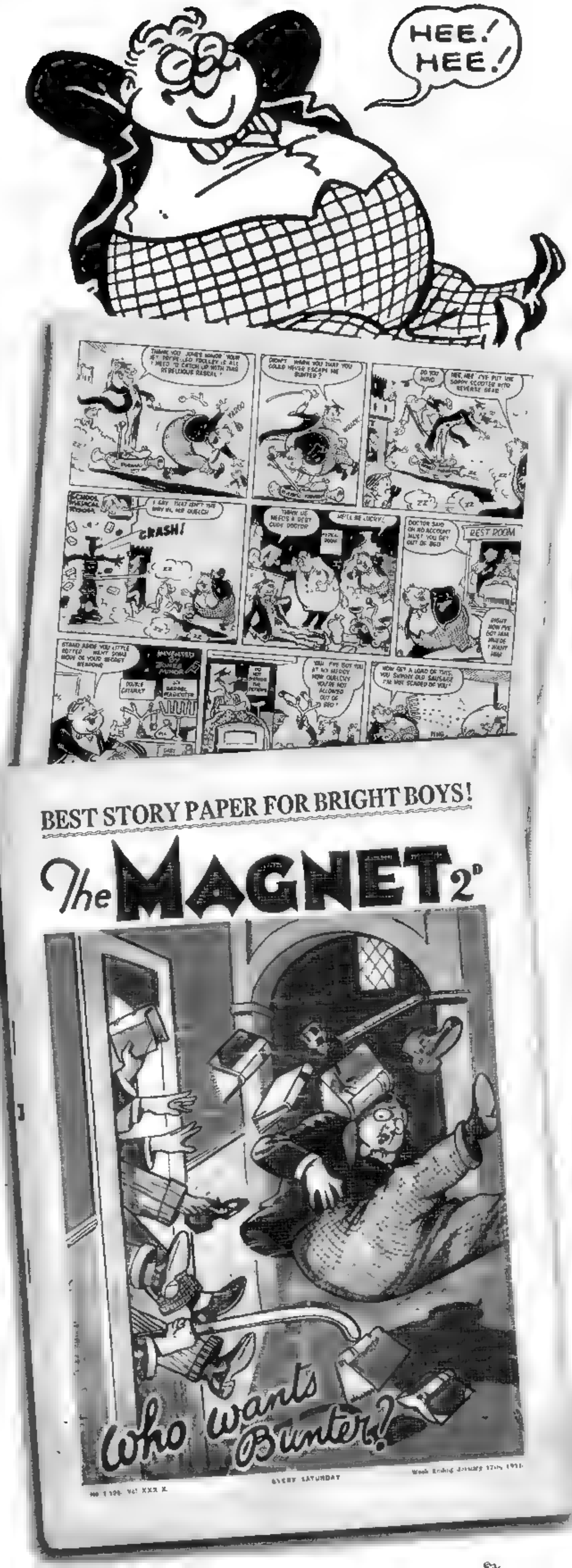
Bunter was not initially even the main character, but just one of a large group of characters who populated the school. Author Hamilton endeavoured always to preserve a balance, although more raggedly so as time went on, between serious stories about other characters, such as Harry Wharton and humorous stories about Bunter. By the 1920s and 1930s, however, it was a rarity to find a story which did not involve Bunter in some way. His function was always to provide comic relief in plots which were essentially serious mystery or adventure stories.

The storylines would feature dramatic events, such as a burglary at the school, the kidnapping or blackmailing of a wealthy schoolboy, the theft of money from a schoolmaster, or even attempted murder. Bunter's function was to solve the mystery humorously, usually bumping into the culprit in the dead of night while raiding the pantry for "grub".

The secret of Bunter's popularity was that the character evoked laughter. He was depicted as both a fat and a fatuous schoolboy, and would get into one scrape after another due to his natural obtuseness or gluttony. But Hamilton would find ingenious and humorous ways of getting him out of his difficulties.

By the nature of the stories, it was impossible for the characters to age. So Bunter remained a lower fourth form junior throughout the thirty year publishing history of The Magnet and throughout the twenty post-war years in which novels about Bunter and Greyfriars were published.

On his hundredth birthday, Bunter will still be a lower fourth form junior: still haunting the tuckshop and the old quadrangle at Greyfriars, and still expecting that mythical postal order. ●



When it was decided that Crikey! *7 was to be our big Thunderbirds issue, I immediately told everybody in the* Crikey! *shed that that particular project was mine. I don't know what kind of rank I pulled that afternoon, but my voice was heard above the others - and there was no dissent. Maybe it was the cream-coloured sash, IR hat and light blue boots that did it!*

After gleefully reassuring myself this was going to be a piece of cake, I knew that at best I had around six pages to fill and that like all articles in Crikey!, *the text was to be visually led.*

Even though I knew I was only going to cover the TV21 series and not the actual programme itself, the visuals still lay at the core of what I was hoping to be talking about. And what visuals!

As regular Crikey! *readers will recall, I have already covered the life a main (some would say or artist, Frank Bellamy (see his stunning portrayal of has never been surpasse*

It's been four and a ha Thunderbirds hit our scre hit our young minds.

For some of us, Thunde indelible mark.

NO STRINGS ATTACHED!

BY GLENN B FLEMING

REPORT DIRECT FROM THE DANGER ZONE RELAYED VIA THUNDERBIRD 5
Sam Lincoln's intention was to kill his business partner, Jack Farrel, in a Canadian forest and set fire to the trees to cover his tracks. But Sam's plans have gone wrong. Farrel has gained the upper hand.
THUNDERBIRDS
YOU CRAZY FOOL LINCOLN WE'RE TRAPPED ALL BECAUSE OF YOU
THEN THE SOUND OF POWERFUL JET ENGINES IS HEARD
LISTEN IT'S AN AIRCRAFT COMING THIS WAY
WHAT'S THE USE? IT CAN'T GET NEAR US THE FIRE WILL FORCE IT BACK
3L 1
THUNDERBIRD 1 TO THUNDERBIRD 2 WHAT IS YOUR E T A AT DANGER ZONE
45 MINUTES SCOTT NOW GO THINGS LOOK
SCOTT OK IL NE AND GIVES HE INSTRUCTIONS HEAVY DUTY A IN ABOVE THE
ARE YOU ALL SET GORDON
THE POD ENTRANCE OPENS TO FORM A SLIPWAY AND THUNDERBIRD 4 IS LAUNCHED
THE INTE RESCUE VEHICLE CLEAR OF
OL HEARD THE MAN LINCOLN GET DOWN THERE AND REMEMBER I'VE GOT THE GUN
WITH ENGINES RACING AGAINST THE ROCKS, LOW THUNDERBIRD 4 FIGHTS TO KEEP
THIS IS GONNA BE RIGHT CAGE FALSE MOVE AND I'LL BE SMASHED AGAINST THOSE ROCKS
4
ARE AT H THUNDERBIRD 4 TEAM
HEY, GOWE AA
SCOTT TRACY WATCHES ANXIOUSLY...
SCOTT - THE MOTORS ARE READY TO BLOW! I'VE GOTTA CUT THE BOOSTERS...
GORDON HAS TIME ONLY TO SHOUT AN AFFIRMATIVE... THEN HE IS HEADING FOR THE WATERFALL...

A GLIMPSE OF FRANK BELLAMY'S DEFINITIVE THUNDERB

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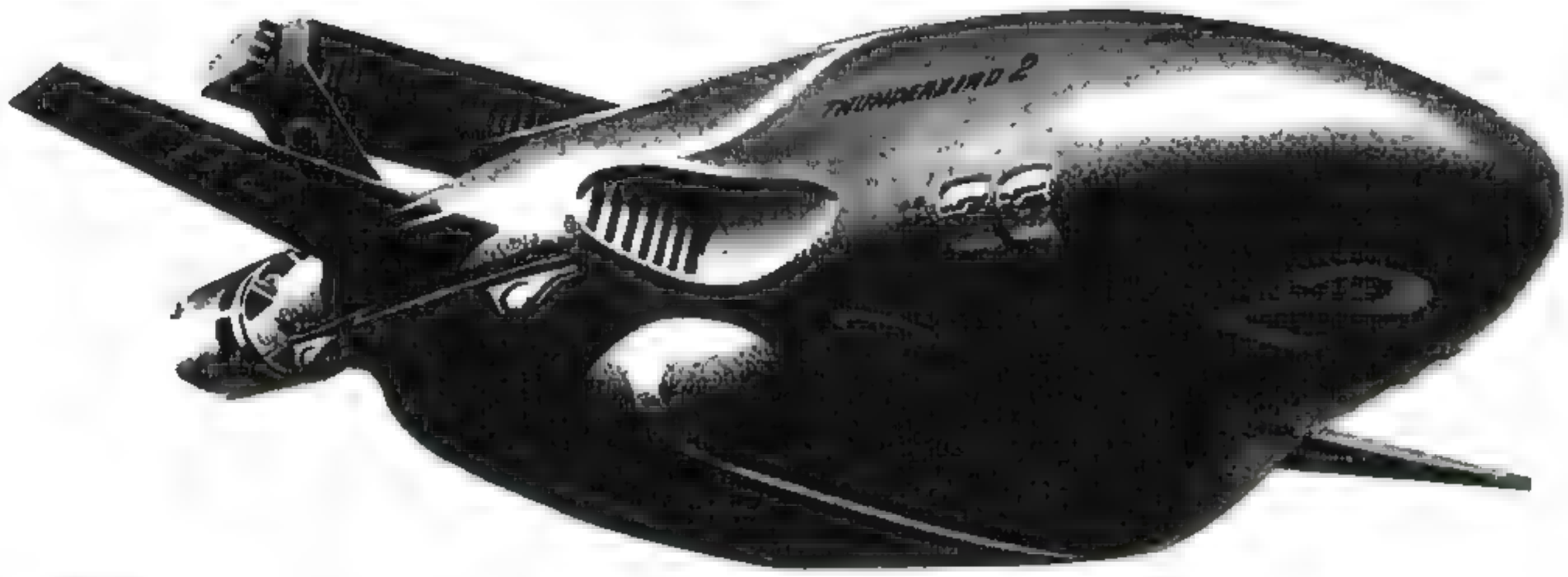


THAT WAS QUITE A BUMP, GORDON... ANY DAMAGE?
JUST A SLIGHT DENT, SCOTT... I'M TAKING FARREL AND LINCOLN ABOARD NOW. BUT I'M WORRIED ABOUT THE ENGINES OVERHEATING.
TEMPERATURE
DANGER
NEXT SECOND...
I CAN'T HOLD HER SCOTT!
ARE FARREL AND LINCOLN OKAY?

BIRDS ARTWORK (TV21 ISSUE 55, 1966)

Not only is *Thunderbirds* one the most celebrated TV shows in history, it is also one of the best illustrated series in comics. The first Thunderbird illustrated strip appeared in January 1966 when Frank Bellamy's distinctive line and wash artwork appeared in *TV Century 21* (later changed to *TV21*) issue 52. Bellamy's style was as different as any other comic artist as the Thunderbird machines themselves were from the Wright brothers' Kitty Hawk.

DREAD REALITY

Bellamy, of course, was a master of line, colour and, above all, mood. While his rendering of people was not as realistic as, say, Ron Embleton, his distinctive style gave yet another vision to the work. I would describe Bellamy's linework as 'gritty' (not too dissimilar from Cam Kennedy, one time mainstream artist with *2000AD* in general and Judge Dredd/Rogue Trooper in particular).

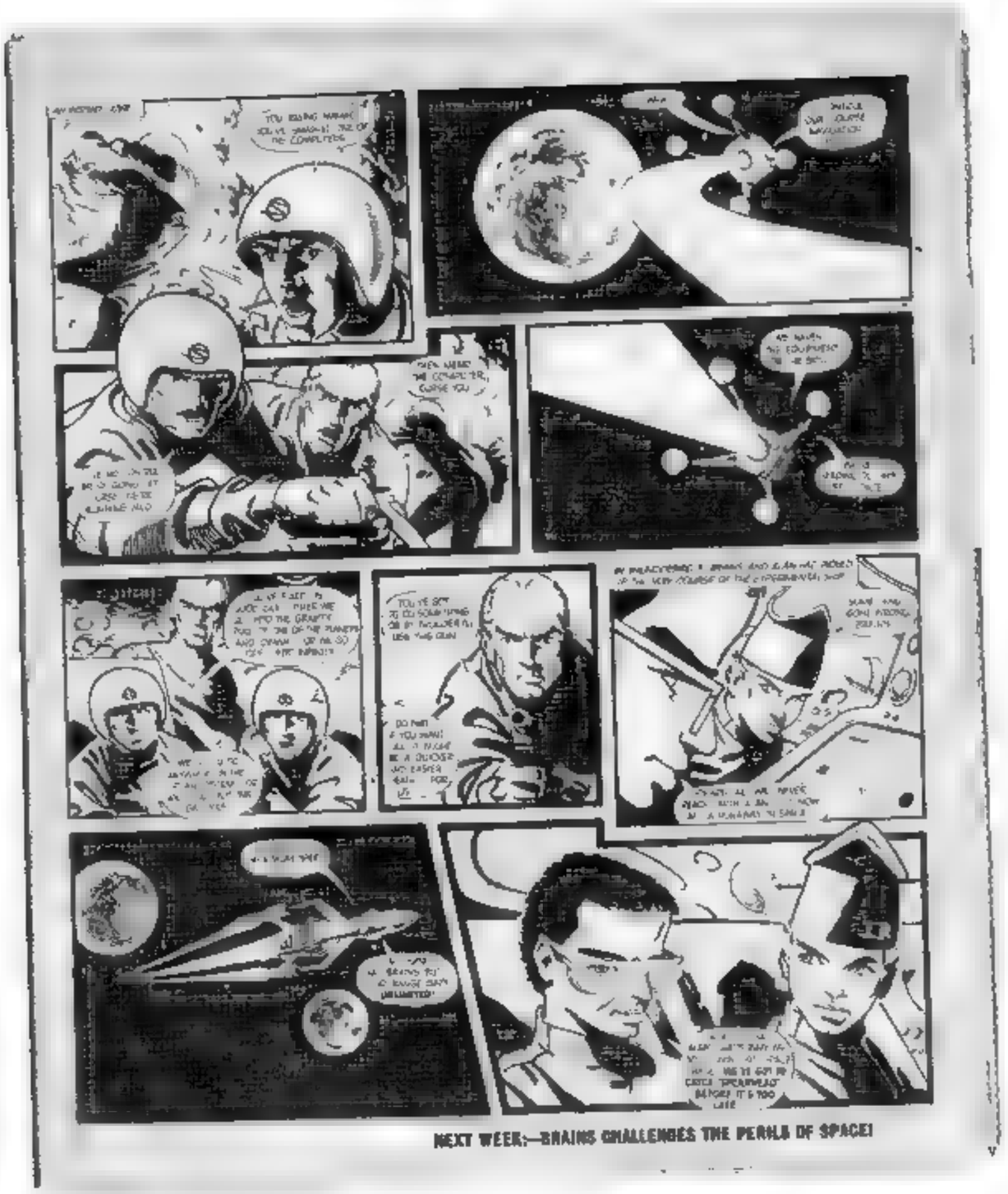
From the outset, Bellamy had decided that he wouldn't be happy drawing the characters as marionettes, so, like Mike Noble ('Fireball XL5' and 'Captain Scarlet') and Ron Embleton ('Stingray' and 'Captain Scarlet') before him, he drew them as 'real' people. Bellamy even used plastercasts of the characters' heads (supplied by the Anderson production team) for his art. In doing this, Bellamy was able to capture all the charm and personality of the marionettes from the show.

Bellamy's work had previously been seen in the Eagle, where his beautiful depiction of Dan Dare had even surpassed the artwork of Dare's creator Frank Hampson.

(Hampson had left the strip after ten years due to ill health and problems with the publishers - see *Crikey!* 5).

TOP GEAR

His incredible rendering of all kinds of machinery, be they spacecraft or cars, meant he was the perfect choice for Thunderbirds. This was not lost on Alan Fennell, editor of the Anderson produced comic. >



(ABOVE) TV21 & JOE 90 ISSUE 10 (NOVEMBER 1969) & (RIGHT) ISSUE 16 (JANUARY 1970) ART BY JOHN COOPER

TV21 had been the brainchild of Keith Shackleton, managing director of AP Films Merchandising (later Century 21 Merchandising). He recognised the potential impact of a weekly comic depicting the further adventures of shows such as *Supercar*, *Fireball XL5* and *Stingray*.

The decision to publish an Anderson comic resulted in one of the finest comics ever produced. Printed by photogravure, the high grade quality paper enabled *TV21* to stand above its contemporary's in quality, design and substance.

With the quality of production highest in the mind of Shackleton, *TV21* was able to bring some of the finest British artists of the time into the fold. Within weeks of its debut, *TV21* was the best-selling comic in the country. The fans loved it as they could now follow the adventures of their heroes in full colour instead of black and white on their monochrome TV sets.

At the time the comic's first issue was published (January 1965), *Thunderbirds* was still in production and so did not appear in the comic. Shackleton and his team did, however, lay the foundations for the appearance of Thunderbirds in the comic (and on TV) by producing the 'Lady Penelope' comic strip; Parker, FAB 1 and all. This move was unprecedented and proved to be a master stroke.

Other elements of *Thunderbirds* also appeared in the comic. Both the military machine Sidewinder and the super jet airliner Fireflash (which would appear in the very first TV episode of *Thunderbirds*) featured in *Stingray* almost a full year before the Thunderbirds strip.

THE REAL BRAINS: GERRY ANDERSON

PROMOTION

Following Thunderbirds first appearance in *TV21*, Lady Penelope moved to her own comic, drawn by the great Frank Langford where she continued her own adventures. In the process, 'Lady Penelope' all but disappeared from the Thunderbirds strip in *TV21*.

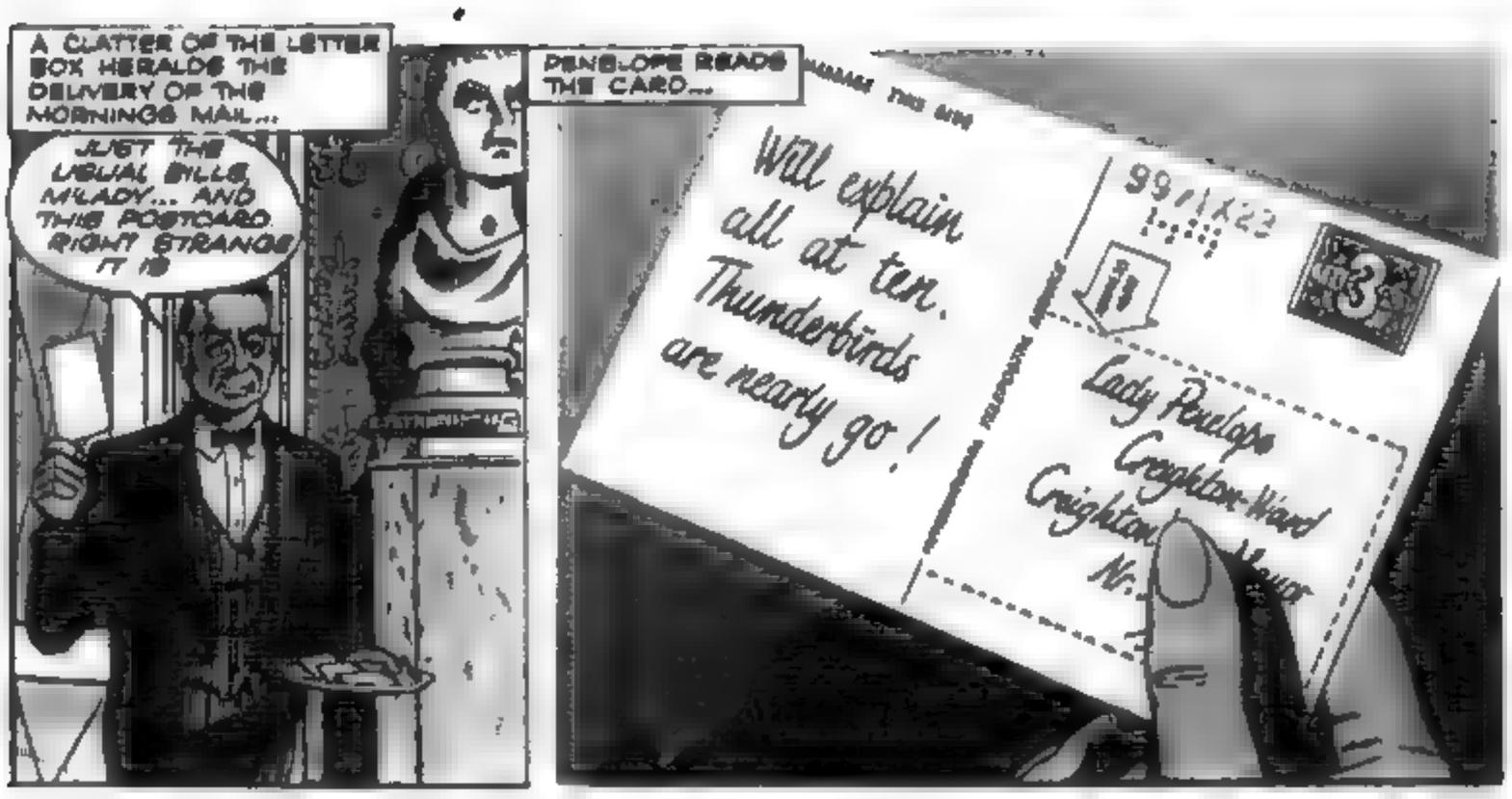
She, did, however make an appearance in the very first Thunderbirds episode in *TV21*, arriving at Tracy island to meet with Jeff and his boys in a brilliant cross-over from her own comic. Clues had been placed in her strip.

Indeed, in the penultimate strip before the launch of 'Thunderbirds' in *TV21*, Penny had received a post card from (we find out later) Jeff Tracy saying: "Will explain all at ten. Thunderbirds are nearly go!"

Jeff duly arrives at ten o'clock and recruits Penelope as IR's British agent.

CRAFTY

In a strange move, Thunderbirds 1 and 2 do not


A CLATTER OF THE LETTER BOX HERALDS THE DELIVERY OF THE MORNINGS MAIL...
JUST THE USUAL BILLS, M'LADY... AND THIS POSTCARD. RIGHT STRANGE IT IS
PENELOPE READS THE CARD...
Will explain all at ten. Thunderbirds are nearly go!
Lady Penelope Creighton-Ward

(ABOVE): PARKER DELIVERS A RATHER STRANGE POSTCARD...
ART BY ERIC EDEN

appear in the very first strip - we meet the family, but only get a fantastic illustration of Thunderbird 3 as it blasts off for earth orbit and Thunderbird 5.

Fennell's scripting here is wonderful as we see the main essence of the show - Thunderbird 5's ability to pick up distress signals from anywhere in the world at any time, in any language.

Fennell, who continued writing the strip for the first six storylines to maintain continuity with the TV series, had approached Bellamy to draw Stingray eighteen months earlier but, due to contract restraints with the *Eagle* and 'Dan Dare', Bellamy had declined. Fennell pursued his man and signed Bellamy when his contract with Eagle publishers Longacre expired. Fennell's choice proved to be one of the best he ever made regarding an artist for *TV21*.

Of course, fans of Ron Embleton and Mike Noble might argue against that!

Whatever a person's feeling about the standard of a certain artist's work that appeared in *TV21*, no-one could disagree that it boasted the best British artists around at that time. And, in my opinion, Frank Bellamy was the best.

FRANK & NANCY BELLAMY

ARTFUL

'Thunderbirds' dominated *TV21*. 'Stingray' had previously been seen in the centre spread, giving artist Ron Embleton a free reign to show his talents. But now it was Bellamy's turn.

He didn't let anyone down. Sadly and almost criminally, the third page of Bellamy's strip was printed in black and white. Even though the Anderson machine was behind the production, not all the comic was printed in colour. If you look these issues up or buy the *Carlton Classic Comic Strip* edition (2001) you will witness Bellamy's use of line and wash on that third page. Get it. See them - they are a real treat!

In *TV21* issue 59, International Rescue was called to Africa. Bellamy had a great interest in African culture and that is clearly seen in his portrayal of an African tribe moving menacingly through the jungle. His depiction of the African tribe gives the viewer a glimpse of Bellamy's great talent as an artist and his rendering of the rhino and elephants in the story are beautiful.

Bellamy's use of composition and perspective is second to none and his colour work on explosions, backgrounds and on the Thunderbirds machines themselves show what a master craftsman he was.

FINAL ACT

Other artists, Don Harley among them, followed Bellamy's run on Thunderbirds but none lived up to his wonderful depiction of Gerry Andersons greatest achievement.

By the end of the FAB 60s, *TV21* was tired and on the wane. Century 21 Publishing closed its doors and >

FROM TOP:
LADY PENELOPE ANNUAL (1966)
THUNDERBIRDS ANNUAL (1966)
TV CENTURY 21 ISSUE 9 (MARCH 1966)
TV CENTURY 21 ISSUE 73 (JUNE 1966)

(ABOVE) SCOTT & VIRGIL TRACY SHOW THEIR EXPERTISE IN ... LIFTING RHINOS! ART BY FRANK BELLAMY

forced this beautiful comic to merge with the lesser magazine *Joe 90*. After only two issues 'Thunderbirds' was relegated to two pages per episode.

Bellamy, having drawn the strip almost non-stop for four years was clearly tired, too and because the strip was to be produced in black and white it meant a drop in Bellamy's fee. Lucrative magazine cover art and not least the *Daily Mirror* strip 'Garth' beckoned and Bellamy moved on, leaving the art chores to John Cooper.

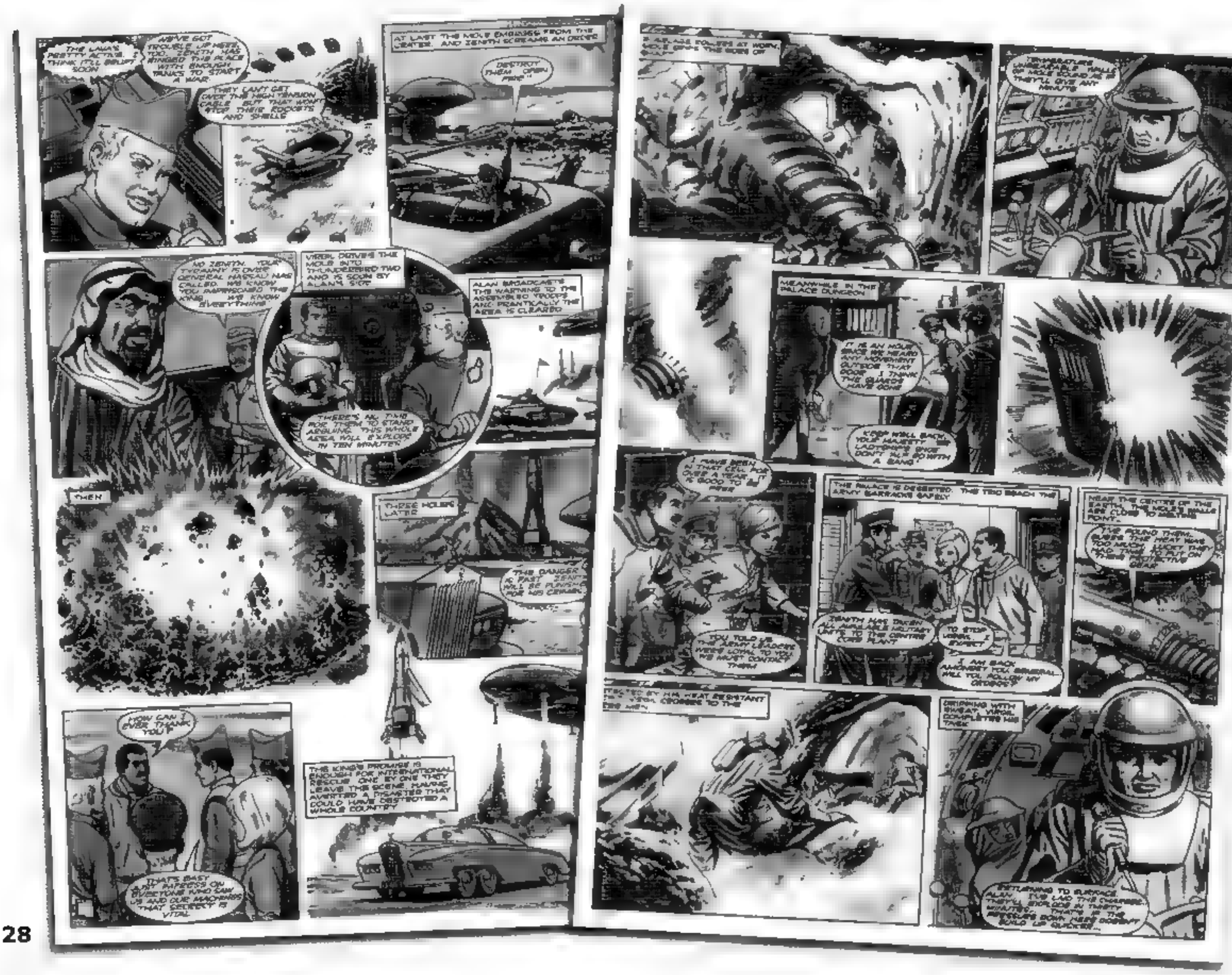
While a good draftsman, Cooper could not match Bellamy's dynamism and inventiveness. Cooper had cut his teeth on the Thunderbird Annuals and drew occasional strips in Lady Penelope and Captain Scarlet. His art was similar to Bellamy's 'scratchy' style, but still a million miles off. The strip suffered and died with the abdication of Bellamy (although Cooper would return to the strip in the 1990s with some success).

TV21 and Joe 90 sported several painted Thunderbirds covers by Alan Willow, but even this ploy could not lift falling sales.

If Bellamy's leaving wasn't bad enough, the writers were seemingly bent on turning International Rescue into a simple Police Force rather than an exciting rescue organisation. Soon, Joe 90 disappeared from the masthead and the Thunderbirds strip disappeared soon after.

In all, while Thunderbirds *gave us some of the best television we had ever seen,* TV21 *gave us some of the best art ever seen in the history of British comics.* ●

(BELOW) DON HARLEY STEPPED IN FOR FRANK BELLAMY FOR TV21 ISSUES 93-98 (OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1966)


THE LAVA'S PRETTY ACTIVE. I THINK IT'LL ERUPT SOON
WE'VE GOT TROUBLE UP HERE, TOO. ZENITH HAS RINGED THIS PLACE WITH ENOUGH TANKS TO START A WAR.
THEY CAN'T GET OVER THE HIGH TENSION CABLE BUT THAT WON'T STOP THEIR ROCKETS AND SHELLS
AT LAST THE MOLE EMERGES FROM THE CRATER, AND ZENITH SCREAMS AN ORDER
DESTROY THEM OPEN FIRE!!
NO ZENITH, YOUR TYRANNY IS OVER! GENERAL HASSAD HAS CALLED. HE KNOWS YOU IMPRISONED THE KING. HE KNOWS EVERYTHING
VIRGIL DRIVES THE MOLE INTO THUNDERBIRD TWO AND IS SOON BY ALAN'S SIDE
ALAN BROADCASTS THE WARNING TO THE ASSEMBLED TROOPS AND FRANTICALLY THE AREA IS CLEARED
THERE'S NO TIME FOR THEM TO STAND ARGUING. THIS WHOLE AREA WILL EXPLODE IN TEN MINUTES!
THEN
THREE HOURS LATER
THE DANGER AT PAST ZENITH WILL BE PUNISHED FOR HIS CRIMES
HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU?
THAT'S JUST A BIT IMPRESS ON DICTATORS WHO SAW US AND OUR MACHINES THAT SECRECY IS VITAL
THE KING'S PROMISE IS ENOUGH FOR INTERNATIONAL RESCUE ONE BY ONE THEY LEAVE THE SCENE HAVING AVERTED A DISASTER THAT COULD HAVE DESTROYED A WHOLE COUNTRY
AT AN ARE FOLDED AT WORK, MOLE GIVE THE SIGN OF
TEMPERATURE UNBEARABLE HALF OF MOLE SOUND AS THEY'LL GIVE ANY MINUTE
MEANWHILE IN THE PALACE DUNGEON
IT'S AN HOUR SINCE WE HEARD ANY MOVEMENT OUTSIDE THAT DOOR I THINK THE GUARDS HAVE GONE
KEEP WELL BACK, YOUR MAJESTY LOCKSMITH'S SHOT DON'T MIX SO WITH A BANG!
I HAVE BEEN IN THAT CELL FOR OVER A YEAR IT'S GOOD TO BE FREE
YOU TOLD US THE ARMY LEADERS WERE LOYAL TO YOU WE MUST CONTACT THEM
THE PALACE IS DESERTED. THE TWO REACH THE ARMY BARRACKS SAFELY
ZENITH HAS TAKEN ALL AVAILABLE MILITARY UNITS TO THE CENTRE CORE PLANT
TO STOP HIM, I EXPECT!
I AM BACK AGAIN! WHY WILL YOU FOLLOW MY ORDERS?
NEAR THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH THE MOLE'S SHELLS POINT.
I'VE FOUND THEM... SURE THE HEAT WAS TOO MUCH. MUST THEY HAD TIME TO PUT ON THEIR PROTECTIVE GEAR
BEFORE BY HIS HEAT RESISTANT SUIT VIRGIL CROSSES TO THE
DRIPPING WITH SWEAT VIRGIL COMPLETES HIS TASK
SETTLEMENT TO SURFACE. ALAN, I'VE LAID THE CHARGES. THEY'LL EXPLODE IN THIRTY MINUTES... THAT'S IF THE PRESSURE DOWN HERE DOESN'T BUILD UP QUICKER...

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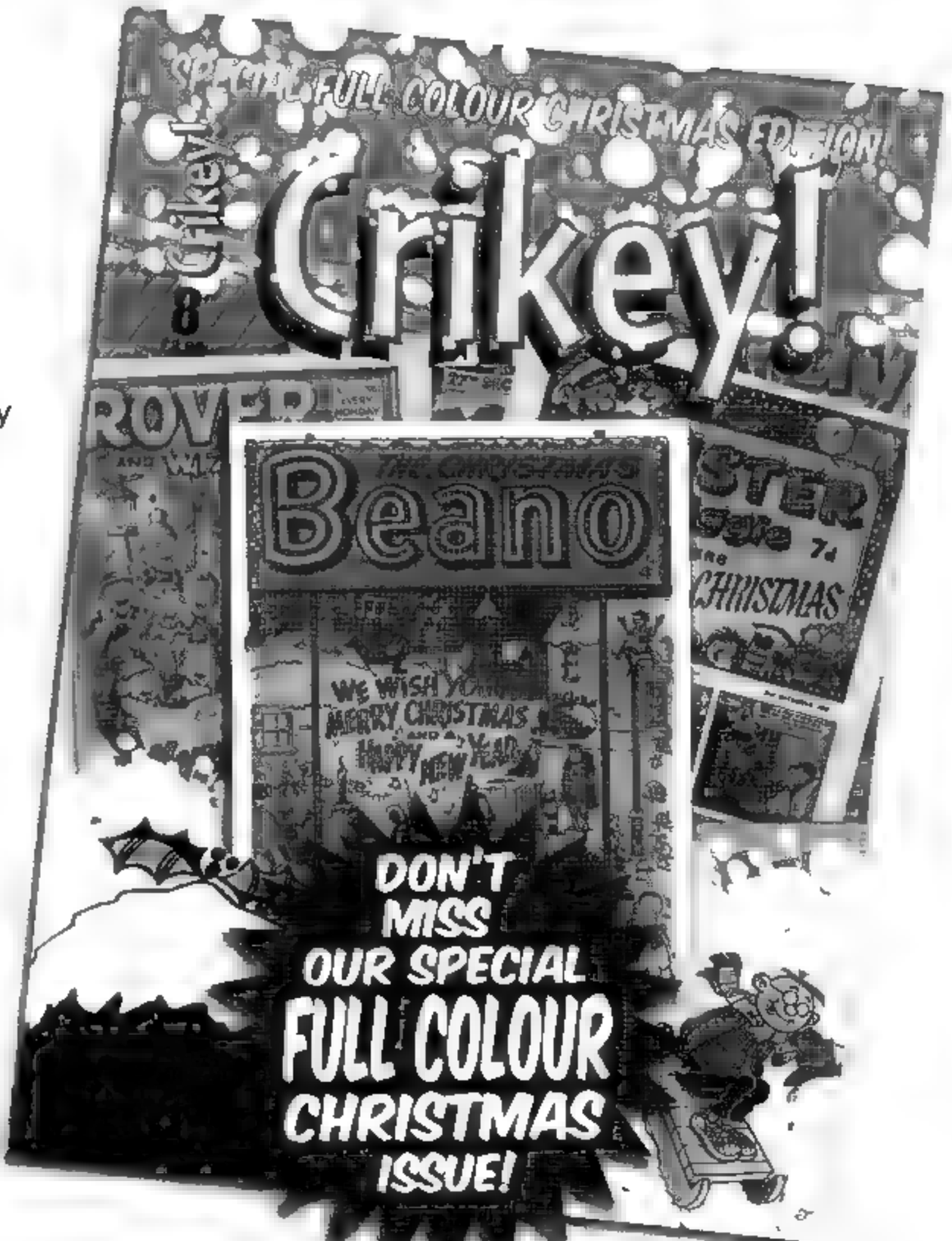
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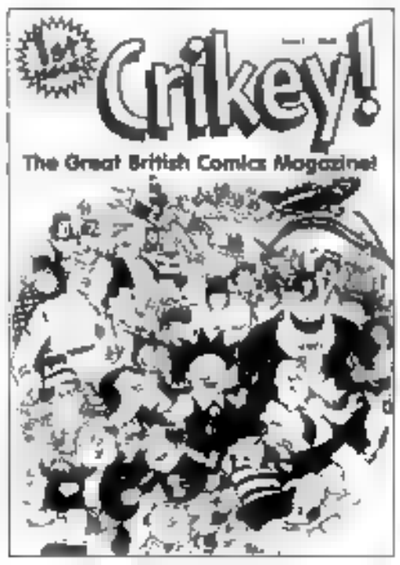
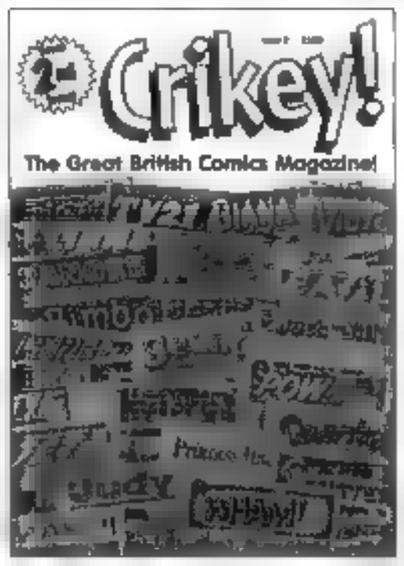
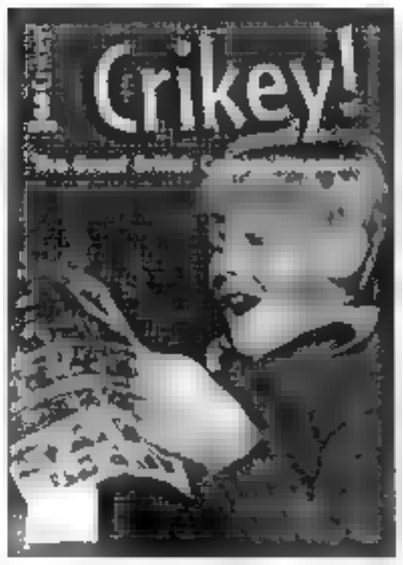


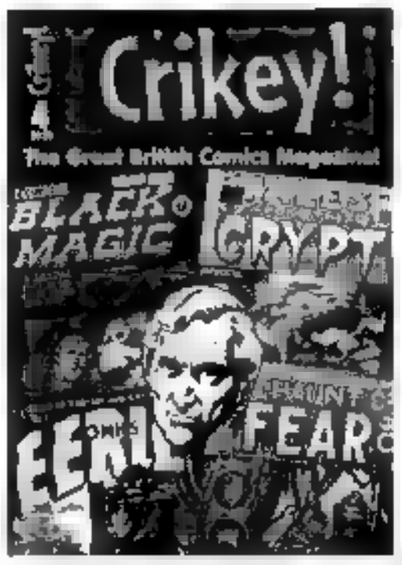
Crikey! 1
Our usual features plus:
Ken Reid interview
Terrible Toys of Dr Droll
Frank Bellamy
Overview of Misty comic
Wham!
Devil in the Shop



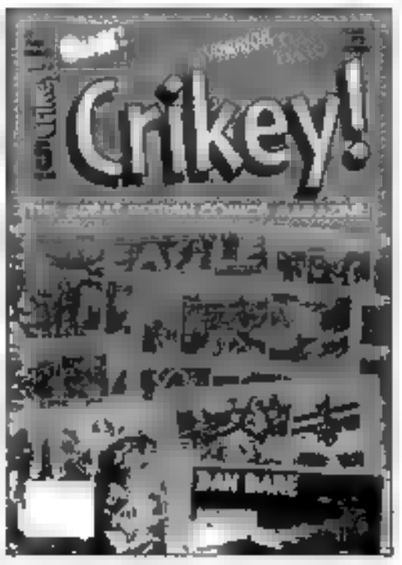
Crikey! 2
Our usual features plus.
The Broons
Zeg the Invincible (Daleks)
Terry Bave interview
Penelope and I
(Lady Penelope)
History of Fleetway
Ron Embleton
Rocket Comic
Victor



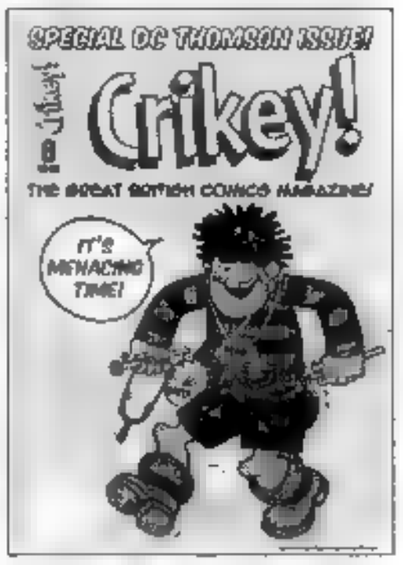
Crikey! 3
Our usual features plus:
1950s space comics
Scream
Smash
Dez Skinn interview
Don Lawrence
Adam Eterno
Rarest annuals – part 1
Fireball XL5 and the JFK assassination



Crikey! 4
Our usual features plus·
Girls'comics
Ian Kennedy's Starblazer covers
1950s horror comics
Rarest annuals – part 2
Mike Noble
Andy Capp
Spellbound
Countdown



Crikey! 5
Our usual features plus:
British Super-hero comics
Warrior Magazine
Romeo Comic
Oink!
Frank Hampson
Gil Page interview
Dan Dare
Commando comic



Crikey! 6
(Special DCT issue!)
Our usual features plus:
Super Cats & Orphan Brats
Happy Birthday Beano!
Dudley Watkins
Ain't Life just Dandy
Hotspur
Warlord
Black Bob
Sparky

TORNADO

BY TONY INGRAM

Tornado, the 'tough, tense and terrific' boys' paper (a term for comics still in use in Britain in the late '70s) was launched on March 24th 1979 by IPC magazines.These days, it is often regarded as having been a sister title to their already popular SF weekly, *2000AD* (mostly because it eventually merged with it), but *Tornado* actually belonged to that subset best described as 'adventure' comics. It had rather more in common with the sadly departed *Valiant* or *Hurricane* than with *2000AD*; *Tiger* (mostly dedicated to sports stories) or *Battle Picture Weekly* (war).

WATCHMEN ARTIST DAVE GIBBONS SHOWS ANOTHER OF HIS SECRET TALENTS

DEATH OF VARIETY

By 1979, titles like *Tornado* with their eclectic 'something for everyone' approach were fast becoming a dying breed, while the more specialised war, sports and even superhero comics were keeping a small but solid fan base as they catered to specific areas of the market.

That being the case, it's hard to see why IPC thought *Tornado* was a viable proposition, and indeed, it only lasted twenty-two issues. While it lasted, however, *Tornado* was a damn good comic, even if these days, ironically, it's best remembered for the fact that it was supposedly edited by 'Big E', a slightly chubby superhero who bore an uncanny resemblance to artist Dave Gibbons!

The fictitious 'super-editor', a cover for the real, invariably unnamed editorial team (even writer and artist credits were rare in British comics at the time) was nothing new. *2000AD* had Betelgeusean blowhard The Mighty Tharg at the helm (and still does!), while its late, lamented sister title, *Star-Lord*, had Star-Lord himself, forever warning his readers of the alien invaders in their midst and encouraging them to join his Star Troopers club.

The ethereal *Misty* hosted her own title, and even the juvenile humour comic *Whizzer & Chips* had Sid and Shiner to speak to the readers on behalf of their respective halves of the two-comics-in-one.

But Big E was just that little bit different.

Big E was real. A photo strip creation to be sure but something that had really only previously been tried in this context in the occasional photo strip adventures of Tharg, whose appearances as an actual bloke in a rubber mask for some reason always seemed somehow less realistic than his comic strip incarnation.

HEAD-HITTER

Likewise, Big E was something of a figure of fun, particularly since the ludicrous skin-tight costume didn't really flatter poor Dave Gibbons' figure. His equally photo stripped editorial team - the lovely Sam, host of joke page Smile With Sam (and something of a readers favourite) and Billy, roving reporter for the infrequent 'Billy Preston Report' series on such worthy topics as the London ambulance service-were rarely seen.

Most of the features E and his crew fronted were received with little enthusiasm by the readers, since they took up valuable strip space. Possibly, *Tornado's* let's-involve-the-readers approach would have worked better if the real editor had simply talked to them directly, but maybe comics weren't yet ready for that level of realism.

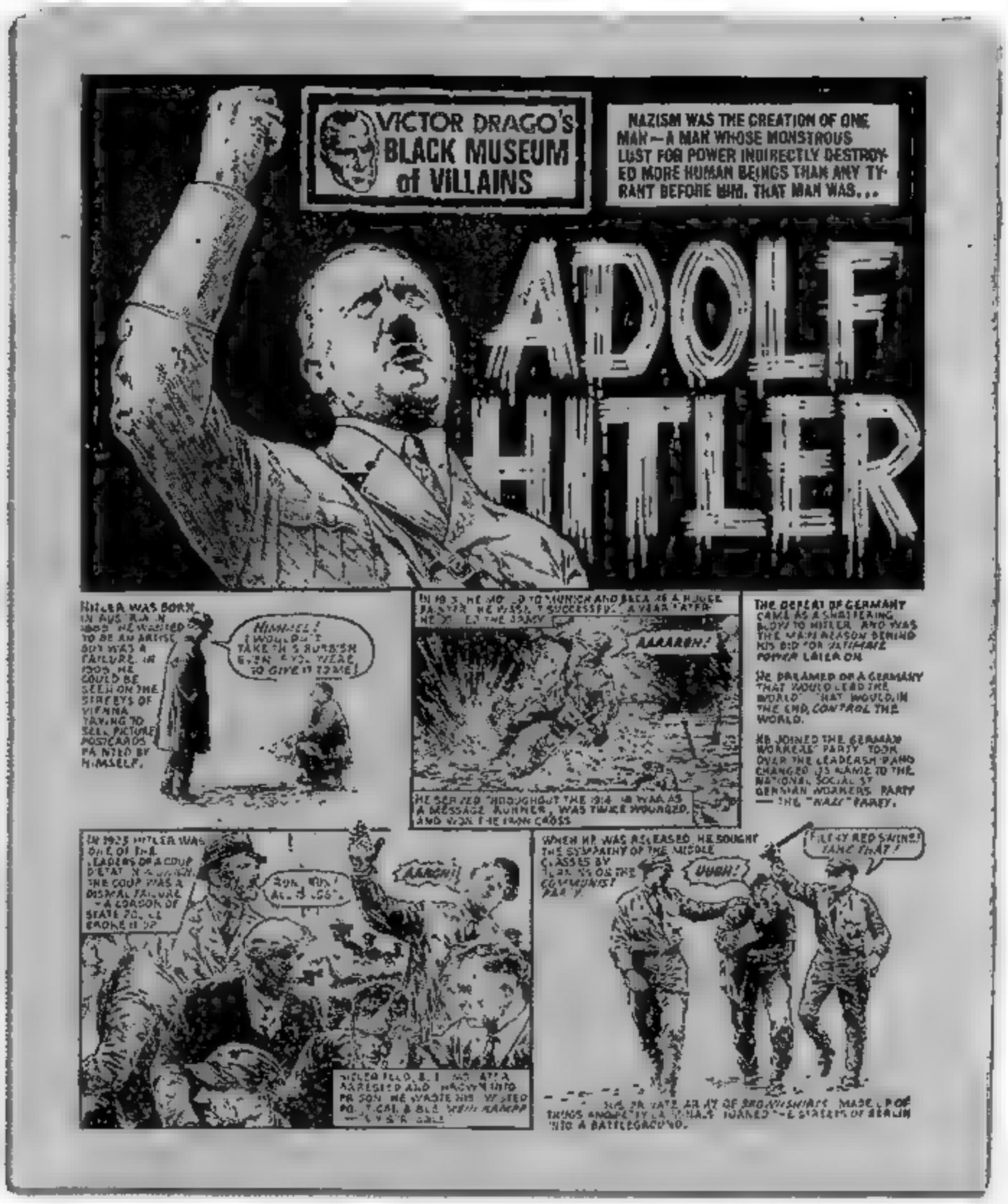
As far as the strips went, *Tornado* did indeed try to provide something for everyone. Fans of the traditional sports adventure strip had 'Storm', the story of a wild boy living in the Highlands with a feral cat named Skarr, discovered and taken back to civilisation by shepherd Andrew Kane to become a champion runner. If the premise sounds familiar, it's because the strip owes a lot to an earlier regular in various British comics, wilderness dwelling man-in-black William Wilson, but the teenage Storm was a little easier to identify with.

As depicted by creators Scot Goodall and Musquera (and later Ian Kennedy), the orphan gypsy boy was a sympathetic figure. His bafflement at the lies, deceits and overly complicated ways of the supposedly civilised world often funny but still a valid comment on our society.

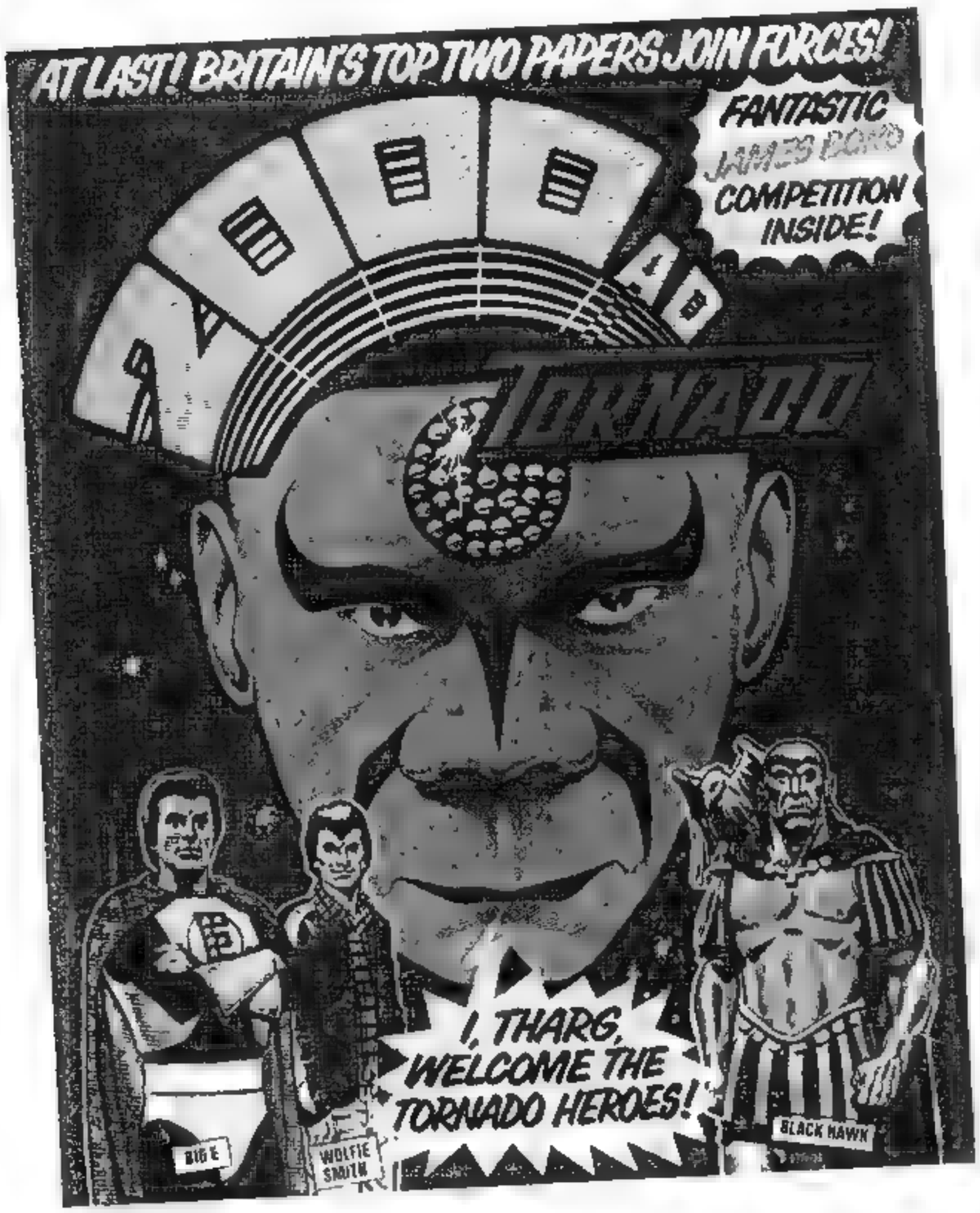
Sadly, *Tornado*'s cancellation cut his career short, though he resurfaced in the 1981 *Tornado Annual* for an uncredited six page adventure.

For those who liked detective fiction, Victor Drago, a Holmesian private detective of the 1920s (by Bill Henry and Mike Dorey) provided traditional pulp style thrills, both in comic strip form and, later, in text stories (though the latter were, again, not credited). >

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE - AT LEAST EVERYONE WHO LIKES BLACK HAWK...


VICTOR DRAGO'S BLACK MUSEUM of VILLAINS
NAZISM WAS THE CREATION OF ONE MAN—A MAN WHOSE MONSTROUS LUST FOR POWER INDIRECTLY DESTROYED MORE HUMAN BEINGS THAN ANY TYRANT BEFORE HIM. THAT MAN WAS...
ADOLF HITLER
HITLER WAS BORN IN AUSTRIA IN 1889. HE WANTED TO BE AN ARTIST BUT WAS A FAILURE. IN 1909 HE COULD BE SEEN ON THE STREETS OF VIENNA TRYING TO SELL PICTURE POSTCARDS PAINTED BY HIMSELF.
HMMMPH! I WOULDN'T TAKE THIS RUBBISH EVEN FOR YOU, DEAR TO GIVE IT TO ME!
AAAARGH!
THE DEFEAT OF GERMANY CAME AS A SHATTERING BLOW TO HITLER, AND WAS THE MAIN REASON BEHIND HIS BID FOR ULTIMATE POWER LATER ON.
HE BLAMED ON A GERMANY THAT WOULD LEAD THE WORLD — WHAT WOULD, IN THE END, CONTROL THE WORLD.
HE JOINED THE GERMAN WORKERS' PARTY, TOOK OVER THE LEADERSHIP AND CHANGED ITS NAME TO THE NATIONAL SOCIALIST GERMAN WORKERS PARTY — THE "NAZI" PARTY.
HE SERVED THROUGHOUT THE 1914-18 WAR AS A MESSAGE RUNNER. WAS TWICE WOUNDED, AND WON THE IRON CROSS
IN 1923 HITLER WAS ONE OF THE LEADERS OF A COUP D'ETAT IN MUNICH. THE COUP WAS A DISMAL FAILURE — A CARICATURE OF STATE POWER. IT BROKE IT UP.
RUN, RUN! ALL IS LOST.
AAARGH!
HITLER WAS ARRESTED AND SHOWN INTO PRISON. HE WASTE HIS TIME IN POLITICAL DEBATE WITH HIS FELLOW CELL-MATES.
WHEN HE WAS RELEASED, HE SOUGHT THE SYMPATHY OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES BY TALKING ON THE COMMUNIST PARTY.
FILTHY RED SWINE! TAKE THAT!
UUGH!
HIS PRIVATE ARMY OF BROWNSHIRTS MADE POLITICAL MEETINGS IN BEER CELLARS AND THE STREETS OF BERLIN INTO A BATTLEGROUND.

IT IS AMAZING TO THINK THAT HITLER WAS CLOSER IN TIME TO TORNADO THAN TORNADO IS TO US IN 2008...



The under-appreciated Drago was actually one of *Tornado*'s best features, at least in its strip incarnation – the text stories lend new meaning to the phrase "deathless prose". Still, Drago and his more or less obligatory cockney assistant Spencer remain memorable, if not really likely ever to get a return engagement.

The story 'The Curse of Graveways Abbey', one of Victor's last outings from the *Tornado Annuals*, particularly deserves a mention for its title alone – they don't write 'em like that anymore!

IT'S WAR!

If war stories were the reader's preference, RE Wright and Lozano's 'Wagner's Walk' was a step up from the usual fare in comics like *Victor* and *Warlord*. For a start, the hero was a German, the stoic Major Wagner trying to escape home with his comrades Gruber and Karl from a Russian labour camp where they've been held for three years (the story was set in 1948).

Wagner and his men are nothing like the then common stereotyped 'Jerries' whose OTT brutality infested most war comics but neither are they perfect. They're just three men who never much wanted to be in the war and who've been forgotten by the world since it ended. Their epic trek across Russia is one of *Tornado*'s highlights, ending in a touching final episode with the loyal Karl shot dead by a fanatical former Nazi just moments before Wagner sets their stolen plane down safely in India.

It's a well crafted tale, set in a pos-war period rarely touched on in comics and in my opinion is one of the best 'war' stories to come out of the Seventies despite only running to seventeen episodes.

SPACESHIPS AWAY!

The obligatory space adventure slot was filled by 'Angry Planet', by *2000AD* stalwarts Alan Hebden and Massimo Bellardinelli. This was the everyday story of genetically engineered human colonists on 21st Century Mars and the big business bad guys trying to wipe them out in order to strip-mine the planet.

Sadly, every anthology has a clunker and in *Tornado*'s case it was 'Angry Planet'. Despite a sound enough premise and a competent creative team, the sad fact is that neither heroic colonist Matt Markham nor villainous Hugo Kray and his loony henchman'The Samurai' are remotely interesting. This makes it is difficult to care about any of them or their world.

A shame, since Hebden actually crafted quite a good back-story for the Martians and their adopted home. To me, it is quite telling that when *Tornado* was cancelled, 'Angry Planet', an SF strip by Bellardinelli

(LEFT): THARG, BLACK HAWK, WOLFIE SMITH AND THAT DAVE GIBBONS (AGAIN) JOIN FORCES...

and therefore logically a perfect candidate for the merger with *2000AD*, was simply brought to a rushed conclusion in issue 22 instead. I guess anyone can have an off day.

Outlaw

'The Lawless Touch' was an entertaining strip about a thief named, appropriately enough, Johnny Lawless, who is unwillingly recruited into the European Special Corps, a top secret organisation dedicated to maintaining security in the (then) nine member nations of the Common Market.

The ESC is run by a mysterious Frenchwoman codenamed Mother – a name unashamedly nicked from the mustachioed lard-bucket who gave Steed his orders in *The Avengers*!

If the premise of this strip also sounds familiar, it's because it is lifted straight from Harry Harrison's *Stainless Steel Rat* books (then being adapted into comics form in *2000AD*), even down to the name 'Special Corps'. The only difference was that Johnny was a contemporary character, while Slippery Jim DiGriz lived in the far future.

Still, it's a fun strip – kind of James Bond meets Minder – and it's a shame that Johnny never resurfaced after the last *Tornado Annual* in 1981. He could quite easily have been resurrected in *2000AD*; he even faced the Volgans from long-running *2000AD* strip 'Invasion' at one point, a curious and wholly unexpected piece of cross-title continuity!

(ABOVE): CAPTAIN KLEP, WRITTEN BY DAVID ANGUS & NICK LANDAU WITH ART BY KEVIN O'NEILL
(BELOW): WOLFIE SMITH IN HIS LAST APPEARANCE (CREATED BY TOM TULLY & VANO)

The Shorts

A smattering of short stories also ran through the title's five month run, many of them were rather daft photo stories starring Big E (in the misguided belief that they were funny) and are best left undescribed. Suffice to say, if I'm ever in need of a superhero I will not be phoning this berk!

The others were one-offs in either the 'Tornado's True Tales' or 'Victor Drago's Black Museum' series. The Black Museum stories were essentially one or two page biographies of infamous figures from history such as Kim Philby and Jesse James, introduced by Drago. I for one would love to know how a detective whose adventures were set in 1929 was in a position to know so much about the likes of Adolf Hitler, who had yet to do anything of note back then!

The TTT feature was more interesting. Beginning with Steve Moore's 'The Tale of Benkie' (a Samurai) in issues 1-3, it looked at warriors through the ages, though sadly *Tornado*'s short run did not give it much time to establish itself.

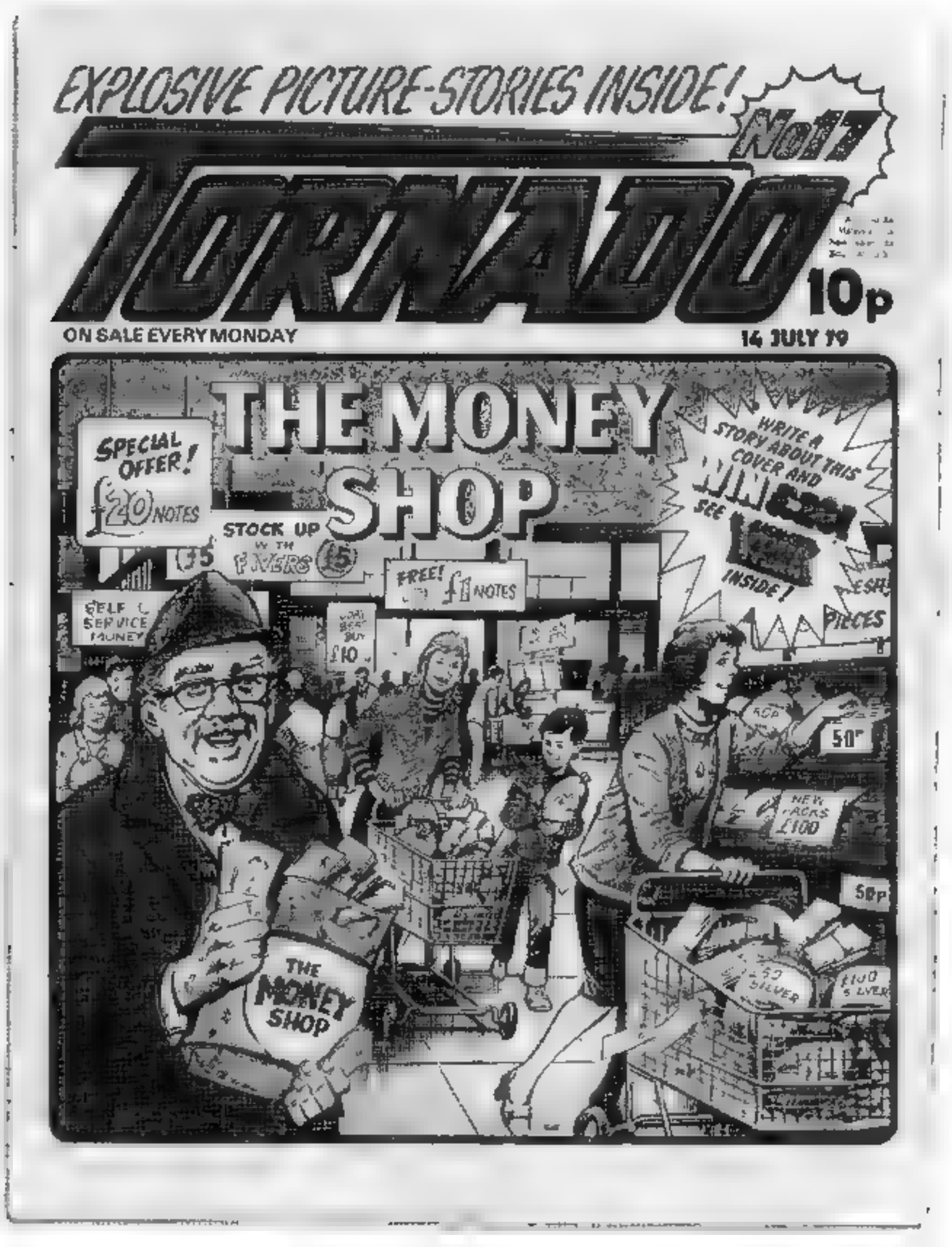
Following 'Warrior', the two part tale of Native American Almighty Voice by Burrell and Richardson in issues 9 and 10, the strip was squeezed out until issue 20. Burrell and Wright's 'The Man Behind the Gun' in issues 20-22 did not match up to its predecessors.

Better was the SF short 'Moon Ghost' in issue 9. >

AND I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF, YOU CRETIN!
OWWW!
AS ZENA FITZGERALD CONDUCTS THE SCREAMING GUESTS INTO THE NIGHT...
BUT TO WOLFIE'S SHOCK...
OH NO... WHAT HAVE YOU DONE? I TOLD YOU TO DETAIN HIM, NOT KILL HIM!
NEEK!
NEEK!!
AH, WELL! AT LEAST WE'VE GOT KRAMER! ONCE HE CONFESSES TO THE POLICE THAT HE FORCED ME TO JOIN HIS GANG, I'LL BE OFF THE HOOK...!
THE ANGELIC CHILD SUPERSTAR WASN'T AS SWEET AS SHE LOOK
NOW I'M RIGHT BACK WHERE I STARTED... ON THE RUN AGAINST GUESS IT'S MY OWN FAULT FOR RECRUITING A GUN-MAD, SHIFTY-EYED RODENT! OKAY, YOU GIVE BEAT IT...!
BUT AS CLEARING, WOLFIE SMITH TAKES TO HIS HEELS... HEADING FOR AN UNCERTAIN... BUT DEEP... THINKER'S PLOT...
IT'S AT TIMES LIKE THIS, YOU'D NEVER BELIEVE THAT I'M THE MOST INTELLIGENT PERSON IN THE WORLD...
I'LL BE OFF, I CRIED! CRIPES, THAT'S JUST MY LUCK! GET RID OF ONE PEST AND NOW I'M FACED WITH HUNDREDS OF 'EM...
NEEK!
NEEK!
NEEK!
THE END

THE HAWK IS ON MY SHOULDERS I FEEL NEW STRENGTH! I CAN LEAP T... SCYTHES... I KNOW I CAN!
CURSE YOU, ROMAN DOG! YOU DID NOT LOOK CAPABLE OF SUCH A FEAT!
A SECOND MIGHTY JUMP CARRIED CRUTUS INTO ONE OF THE REBEL CHARIOTS
AIIEERRGHHH!
I MAY LOOK WEAK, SAVAGE BUT THERE IS NOTHING WEAK ABOUT MY HATE FOR YOU!
CRUTUS GRABBED CONTROL OF THE CHARIOT BUT DID NOT SEE THE REBEL COMING UP BESIDE HIM
MY SPEAR WILL PUT AN END TO YOUR TREACHERY, ROMAN!
IF I CAN JUST OVERTURN THIS CHARIOT I SHOULD BE ABLE TO BLOCK... AARRGGGHH!
BUT THE REBEL WAS TOO LATE CRUTUS CHARIOT TURNED OVER IN THE PATH OF THE ONCOMING REBELS.
AIEEE!
SANDS OF THE DESERT HE'S BLOCKED THE ENTIRE CHARIOT CHARGE!
KERUNKRACKK!
MINUTES LATER, BLACK HAWK FOUND CRUTUS PINNED UNDER THE WRECKAGE
SEE, SIR, EVEN I COULD BE OF USE. I TOLD YOU I COULD BE!
AYE, CRUTUS, YOU DID IT ALONE! YOU ARE INDEED THE [redacted]ST MAN I KNOWN.
YOUR SACRIFICE WILL FOREVER BE REMEMBERED AMONGST MY LEGION FAREWELL NOBLE WARRIOR!
LATER
THE ALARM TRUMPETS... THE MAIN REBEL FORCES ARE HERE! THOUSANDS OF THEM. WE'RE OUTNUMBERED TWENTY TO ONE BUT WE FIGHT TO THE FINISH!
THIS IS THE MOMENT OF RECKONING BUT... CAN'T HELP WONDERING DID MY HAWK REALLY GIVE STRENGTH TO CRUTUS OR DID HE BELIEVE IT TO BE SO? MAYBE I'LL FIND OUT NOW. ON THE BATTLEFIELD!
NEXT WEEK: MASSACRE!

(ABOVE): BLACK HAWK (WRITTEN BY GERRY FINLAY-DAY, DRAWN BY AZPIRI)
(BELOW): IT MIGHT LACK ACTION - BUT IT CERTAINLY IS AN INTRIGUING CONCEPT...



WOLFIE

By far the best-remembered strips in *Tornado* were the two (three if you count the sadly unforgettable one page Superman spoof 'Captain Klep') which actually outlived the title, 'Black Hawk' and 'The Mind of Wolfie Smith'.

By far the best of *Tornado*'s line-up, 'Wolfie Smith' was the story of teenage psychic drifter Ernest Patrick Smith (his initials were an anagram of 'ESP'), 'the boy with the mind power'. It's a difficult strip to categorise. It's part SF, part horror with the odd bit of comedy thrown in but, as created by Tom Tully and Vano, is still one of the most underrated gems of the '70s.

Wolfie himself (no relation to his namesake in the then current TV sitcom *Citizen Smith*, by the way) was a likable tearaway, always on the side of the downtrodden despite his of-stated policy of enlightened self interest, but his luck seemed to get worse even as his powers grew.

Jumping across to the pages of *2000AD* when *Tornado* was absorbed by it with issue (or "programme", as *2000AD* would have it) 127, his adventures continued on and off. It was first drawn by Vano as before and later (*2000AD* 162-177) by Redondo, who made Wolfie look quite unearthly when using his powers. He was the last of the *Tornado* stars to disappear from the pages of 'the galaxy's greatest comic', last seen being pursued across London by a pack of adoring rats he had psychically summoned by accident!

Wolfie resurfaced in the two *Tornado Annuals* in 1980 and 1981 but, apart from a guest appearance of rather dubious canon in the '90s *2000AD* strip 'Armoured Gideon', he hasn't been seen since.

BLACK HAWK DOWN

Sadly, Wolfie's stable mate Black Hawk was not as well served by the merger. Created in *Tornado* 4 by Gerry Finlay Day and Alfonzo Azpiri, Blackie was a Nubian slave in the days of the Roman Empire who, through a combination of luck and determination, gradually worked his way up to becoming an officer in the Legion.

Initially set in 50BC, by issue 5 – one week later! – the strip was set in AD50. Presumably, Finlay Day had done some research in the meantime. Despite this minor continuity flaw, it was otherwise as historically accurate as could be expected. Popular from the start, it occupied the colour centre spread in *Tornado* in issues 10-20 as Black Hawk and his pet hawk 'Mistress' fought their way around the boundaries of the Empire.

When Tornado bit the dust, Black Hawk was the obvious choice (at least in terms of popularity) to be the second transferee to *2000AD*'s pages. Unfortunately, though, there was a minor problem...

FUTURE PAST

While *Tornado* had been a mix of genres, *2000AD* was at that time solely devoted to SF. To

be included Black Hawk, a historical adventure, had to become an SF strip.

In *2000AD* 127, our confused hero was whisked away from Rome to outer space by the alien Entertainers, courtesy of new creative team Alvin Gaunt and Bellardinelli. Forced to fight in an alien arena and teamed up with shaggy alcoholic Ursa and homicidal dwarf Zog, Blackie's life became increasingly more and more insane over the next thirty-five weeks as the writer desperately tried to find a direction for the strip.

Finally, after confronting the monstrous Soul Sucker on Silversun, a planet inside a black hole, Black Hawk and his compatriots were pulled into a singularity in *2000AD* 161, presumably to be crushed out of existence or more likely, given the then recent Disney movie *The Black Hole*, elevated to a new plane of existence. On the whole, it came as something of a relief to many readers, and probably to Black Hawk, too.

Like Wolfie, Blackie returned in the 1981 *Tornado Annual* for a story set in ancient Rome (he'd been absent from the 1980 one, oddly enough) and he also appeared in the 1980 and 1981 *2000AD Annuals* in text stories set during his time with the Entertainers. Like Wolfie, though, he hasn't been seen since.

Tornado's back cover humour strip 'Captain Klep' continued to appear in *2000AD* for awhile, but then the Captain too faded away without anyone really noticing, though he did make a few guest appearances in the short lived Flash Gordon spoof 'Dash Decent'. Fortunately, neither Klep nor Dash has been around to irritate comics' readers since 1980.

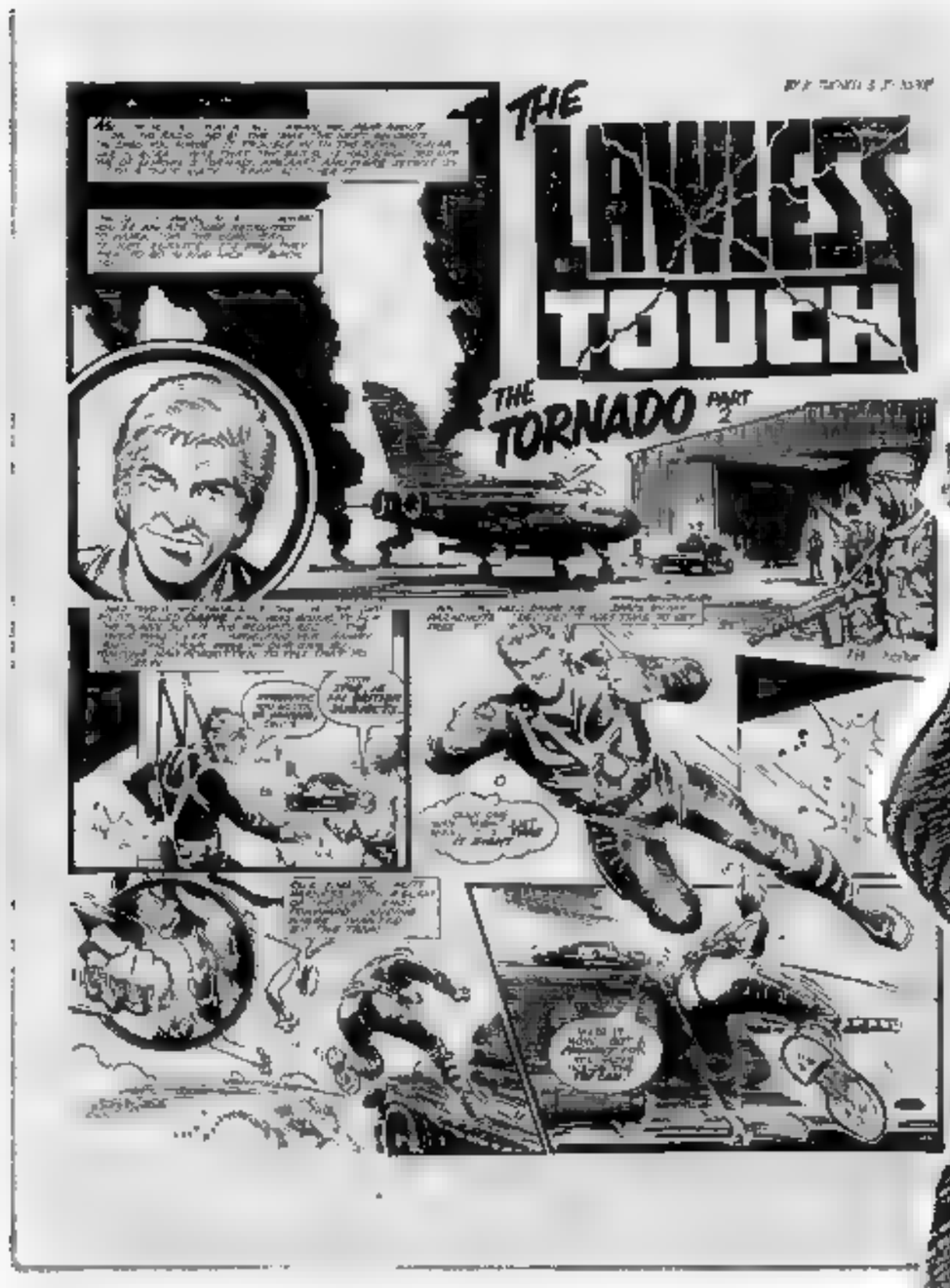
END TIMES

Given that *Tornado*'s last issue was cover dated 18 August 1979, it is rather ironic that the title remained part of *2000AD*'s masthead until 13 September 1980, more than a year later and more than twice the length of time it was published as a title in its own right.

Even after this, it might well have continued to appear in annual format long after 1981, but sadly the practice of issuing annuals of comics long dead was by that time dying out. That's a shame, I feel, as it enabled kids of the sixties and seventies to catch up with old friends from the likes of *Valiant*, *Lion* and *Monster Fun* for years after their favourite titles were no more.

As it was, *Tornado* died after the 1981 annual, just a couple of months after Wolfie Smith took to his heels in *2000AD* 177 and eighteen months after the weekly itself ceased publication.

Still, for a time it played its part in entertaining and even educating Britain's comic reading kids, thanks to the efforts of some talented creators and some truly memorable characters – and even Dave Gibbons, God help him! ●



(ABOVE): THE LAWLESS TOUCH, WRITTEN BY KELVIN GOZNELL AND DRAWN BY JOHN COOPER.

(ABOVE): THE WILD BOY 'STORM' (ART BY CAM KENNEDY).

(RIGHT): VICTOR DRAGO (ART BY MIKE DOREY) WAS ACTUALLY SEXTON BLAKE; THE NAME WAS CHANGED AT THE 11TH HOUR WHEN IPC REALISED THEY NO LONGER HAD THE RIGHTS TO THE CHARACTER OF BLAKE.

The Ballad Of HALO JONES

BY
GLENN B FLEMING

Imagining life in the 50th century can't be easy and yet Alan Moore, along with artist Ian Gibson, seemed to have achieved that with their ground breaking, award winning futuristic series 'The Ballad of Halo Jones'.

Halo Jones first appeared in the British weekly comic *2000AD* back in 1984 as a five page black and white strip. As a much needed female protagonist, Jones was the first major female character in that male dominated weekly publication. The series quickly gained a large audience and was soon recognised as one of Alan Moore's greatest efforts.

Moore planned the series to run to nine books, telling the story of Jones' life from teenager to old age, but fell out with his publisher Fleetway over copyright to the character and as a consequence, only three volumes of Halo Jones were completed.

The three books chronicle ten years of Jones' life, through many comic capers to down right dark and gritty storylines as laughs and violence were never far away.

New Age Girl

From its outset, Moore had decided that this character would not be typical of *2000AD*. Halo Jones is portrayed as a 'normal' and

THE EYES SAY IT ALL - UNTOLD HORRORS OF WAR REFLECTED IN THE EYES OF HALO JONES

unremarkable young girl, struggling through her day like any other person. Jones' character shone for precisely that reason. She *was* ordinary and she felt the isolation we all endure from time to time, wherever we live, whatever our status or income.

Halo Jones lived on The Hoop, a giant artificial ghetto that was tethered to the island formally known as Manhattan. The Hoop was a place designed for leisure; somewhere to keep the unemployed masses happy in uselessness and despair.

Upon it, the inhabitants, be they human or alien, simply vegetate, consuming drugs of their choice at every opportunity to escape their otherwise dreary lives and daily problems.

The society Halo Jones lived in is not unlike today's world: war, famine, politics and social problems filled the air and everybody's minds. Life was a struggle and nothing ever seemed to change for the better. Though constantly hanging in the background, the war was in fact off-world, somewhere ... out there.

There are constant reminders of a dangerous situation on that distant planet though why the war was being fought and in whose name is never clearly established.

GOODBYE, EARTH

Jones' world was subtly designed and executed by Moore and Gibson. Moore had also decided from the outset that this series would not be so much 'in your face' as his previous efforts. The series begins with an innocent 18-year-old Jones discovering the murdered body of her best friend Brinna and, shocked by this loss, deciding to leave Earth forever.

Ian Gibson's artwork at this point, >

though more than competent, is very sketchy and loose. It would improve over the run of the series and he would, in my opinion, eventually produce some of the finest comic art ever seen.

Alan Moore, unsurprisingly, hits his mark from the outset. While Moore's stories are in some ways predictable, the enormity of their scope never fails to please or impress.

When Moore and Gibson were given the go-ahead to produce the second volume they were excited about the prospect of producing something worthwhile in the medium. In the second book more action comes to the fore, plus some striking emotional scenes unlike any seen before in comics.

NEW WORLD DISORDER

Jones finds herself working on the *Clara Pandy* starcruiser where she encounters terrorists, robot canines and even intelligent rats and dolphins.

Halo Jones' new world is far stranger than previous and how she adjusts and changes to fit into this brave new world is superbly told by Moore.

The third and final volume shows Halo caught up in the war she feared, the war she protested against, the war she signed on to fight.

Jones joins Beta platoon, seeing action on many planets and in many systems. The experience changes her perspective and her life. The anti-war theme, while nothing new, takes a different slant as seen from a female point of view. While not pushing the endless 'macho man' line as other stories found in *2000AD* at the same time, Jones' war story is the same as everyone's - full of fear, death and uncertainty.

The entire series is written in short episodes, little bursts of genius and then, abruptly, the series is over and we are left as alone and bereft as Halo Jones was at her worst ebb.

(LEFT): GENERAL LUIZ CANNIBAL AND THE SERGEANT

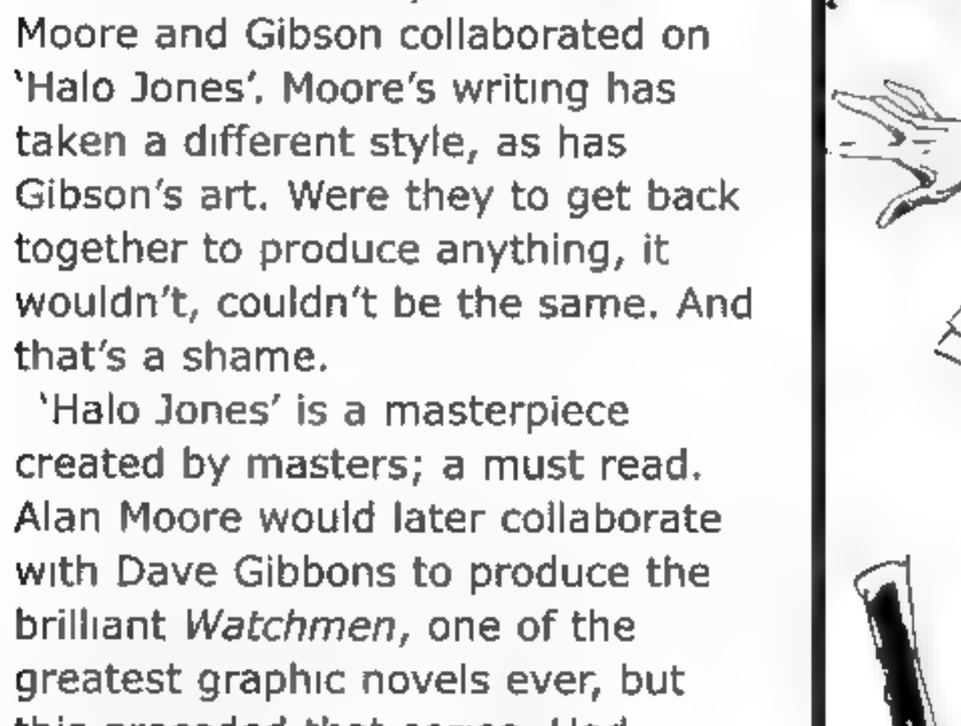
COPYWRONG

'Halo Jones' was set to go places she, and us, hadn't been before. The story was set and all Moore and Gibson had to do was deliver the next verses of the ballad. Then came disagreements over copyright and an untimely end to an epic.

It is now over 20 years since Moore and Gibson collaborated on 'Halo Jones'. Moore's writing has taken a different style, as has Gibson's art. Were they to get back together to produce anything, it wouldn't, couldn't be the same. And that's a shame.

'Halo Jones' is a masterpiece created by masters; a must read. Alan Moore would later collaborate with Dave Gibbons to produce the brilliant *Watchmen*, one of the greatest graphic novels ever, but this preceded that series. Had Moore been given the green light to continue his work on 'Halo Jones', would he have written *Watchmen*?

Only he can answer that. ●



SILVERACRE COMICS

I'M BUYING ALL COMIC ART AND 1950'S / 60'S BRITISH COMICS, TOYS AND COLLECTIBLES!

WANTED!

ALL ORIGINAL COMIC ARTWORK, BRITISH OR AMERICAN. I HAVE SPENT WELL OVER A MILLION POUNDS IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS BUYING ALL TYPES OF COLLECTIBLE ITEMS. I AM BOTH A DEALER AND COLLECTOR WITH A PASSION FOR ORIGINAL COMIC ART AND PAY RECORD PRICES ON A REGULAR BASIS FOR ITEMS I AM LOOKING FOR. I WILL CONSIDER ANYTHING COLLECTIBLE FROM ONE PAGE TO A LARGE COLLECTION BUT AT PRESENT I AM PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN 1960'S AND 1970'S AMERICAN COMIC ART, HIGH END – HIGH VALUE COMIC ART PAGES, 2000AD COVERS, EAGLE COVERS, TV CENTURY 21 COVERS AND INTERIOR PAGES, LOOK IN, LION, VALIANT, IN FACT ALL 1960'S AND 1970'S COMIC ART, ALL DC THOMSON, SMASH, WHAM, TIGER, DANDY AND BEANO COVERS AND INTERIORS.

WANTED! A FEW GOOD MEN!

BOO COOK, BRETT EWINS, BRIAN BOLLAND, BRYAN TALBOT, CAM KENNEDY, CARL CRITCHLOW, CARLOS EZQUERRA, CLIFF ROBINSON, CLINT LANGLEY, COLIN MACNEIL, COLIN WILSON, DAVE GIBBONS, DEAN ORMSTON, ERIC BRADBURY, GLENN FABRY, GREG STAPLES, HENRY FLINT, IAN GIBSON, IAN KENNEDY, JAMIE HEWLETT, JASON BRASHILL, JOCK, KEVIN O'NEILL, KEVIN WALKER, MASSIMO BELARDINELLI, MIKE COLLINS, MIKE MCMAHON, PETER DOHERTY, ROBIN SMITH, RON SMITH, SEAN PHILLIPS, SIMON BISLEY, SIMON DAVIS, STEVE DILLON, TREVOR HAIRSINE. JUST TO NAME A SMALL FEW!

I'M NOW LOOKING TO EXPAND OUT OUR COMIC ART SELECTION, I'M LOOKING TO PURCHASE ORIGINAL COMIC ART FOR BOTH SILVER ACRE STOCK AND MY OWN PERSONAL COLLECTION. IF YOU ARE A COLLECTOR OR ARTIST AND WOULD CONSIDER SELLING YOUR COMIC ART TO ME PLEASE LET US KNOW. WILL CONSIDER ANYTHING FROM ONE PAGE TO A LARGE COLLECTION OR AN ARTISTS PORTFOLIO AND AS ALWAYS WE ARE PREPARED TO PAY A HIGH PRICE TO GET ITEMS WE REQUIRE. THIS REQUEST IS PARTICULARLY BEING SENT TO CUSTOMERS WHO PURCHASED ODD 2000AD AND RELATED BRITISH ART IN THE PAST. YOU MAY HAVE ONE PAGE OR A FEW PAGES THAT YOU PICKED UP AT UKCAC OVER THE YEARS OR OTHER SIGNINGS ETC. I'M EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN THESE!
IF YOU'VE GOT A PAGE LET US KNOW THE TITLE OF THE COMIC IT CAME FROM, ISSUE AND PAGE NUMBER AND I WILL MAKE YOU AN OFFER WITH NO COMMITMENT OR PRESSURE TO SELL. ALSO! IF YOU KNOW OF ANY ART DEALS, BIG OR SMALL, EITHER SINGLE PAGES THAT MAY BE FOR SALE,

STOP PRESS! WHO HAS THE MISSING 2000AD COVERS?

THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF UNACCOUNTED FOR PRE-ISSUE #600 COVERS AND QUALITY INTERIOR PAGES THAT SIMPLY ARE UNACCOUNTED FOR. THESE ARE ITEMS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO ME PERSONALLY AND I WILL PAY A HIGH PRICE TO OBTAIN ANY 2000AD COVERS OR INTERIOR PAGES AND IF YOU HAVE ANY BRIAN BOLLAND ORIGINAL ART, EVEN LESSER PAGES, IT'S A SERIOUSLY GOOD TIME TO SELL AS PRICES ARE VERY HIGH AT THIS PRESENT MOMENT! CASH WAITING! 01244 680048 OFFICE HOURS OR SIMPLY EMAIL DETAILS.

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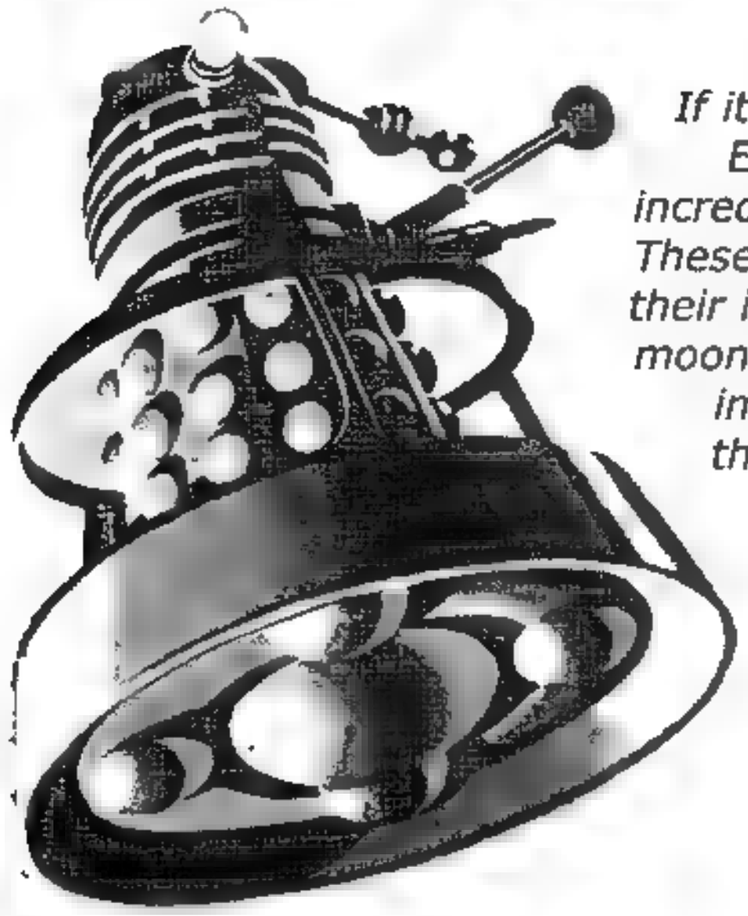
Each issue of Crikey! highlights the career and work of a major British comic artist. This time Glenn B Fleming looks at the detailed character work of...

RON TURNER

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE BOOK PALACE WWW.BOOKPALACE.COM

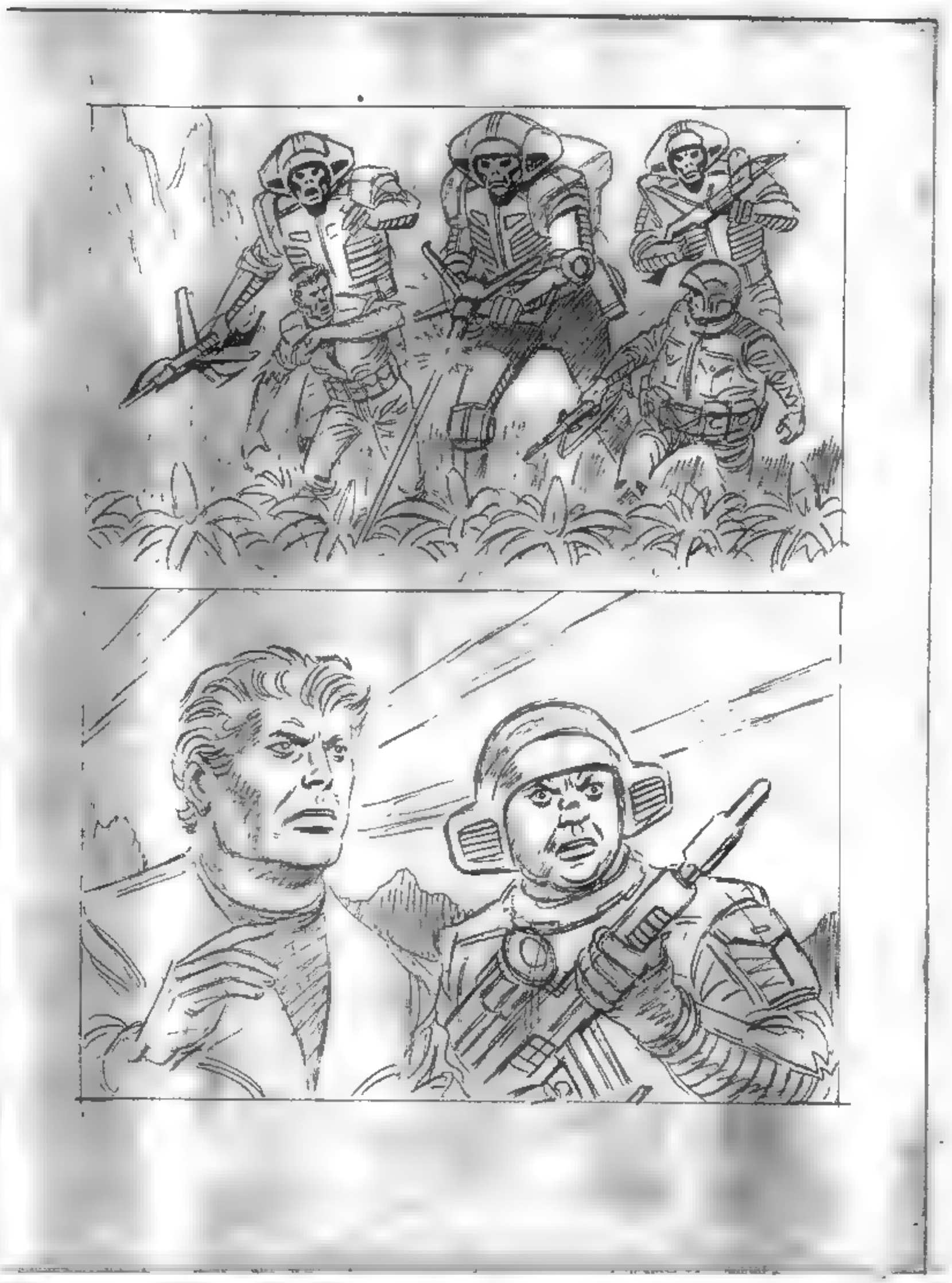


If it were known how many writers have been influenced by the words of HG Wells, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jules Verne and suchlike, then that would make a truly incredible story. Whether it related to science fiction or not would be another matter. These three writers were the masters and innovators of that genre. That they wrote their influential words before man could hardly get off the ground let alone reach the moon is nothing short of staggering. And they had a rare quality that bonded them: imagination. That, coupled with the blessing of being able to put their innermost thoughts down on paper for all to share - those stories were full of wonder for the young Ronald Turner.

Ron Turner began to read Wells' *War of the Worlds* [1898], *The Time Machine* [1895], *The First Men in the Moon* [1901]) Burroughs' *Tarzan the Ape Man* [1912], and Verne's *Journey to the Center of the Earth* [1864], *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea* [1870], and *Around the World in Eighty Days* [1873] when he was a small child. Ron would eagerly wait to pick up their new (to him) work, eyes darting across each page, soaking up the prose, visualising their scenarios and characters.

Born in 1922, Ron Turner's interest in science fiction began with these novels and film classics such as *Metropolis* (1927) and *Things to Come* (1936). These images left an indelible mark on the young Turner's mind. The Saturday morning Flash Gordon serials shown at the local 'flea-pit' also made a great impression on him, but it was the covers of the American pulp magazines such as *Amazing* and *Astounding* which encouraged Turner to copy them and, later, create his own visions of the future.

These, then, were the main influences on the young man as he began to develop his interest in art.



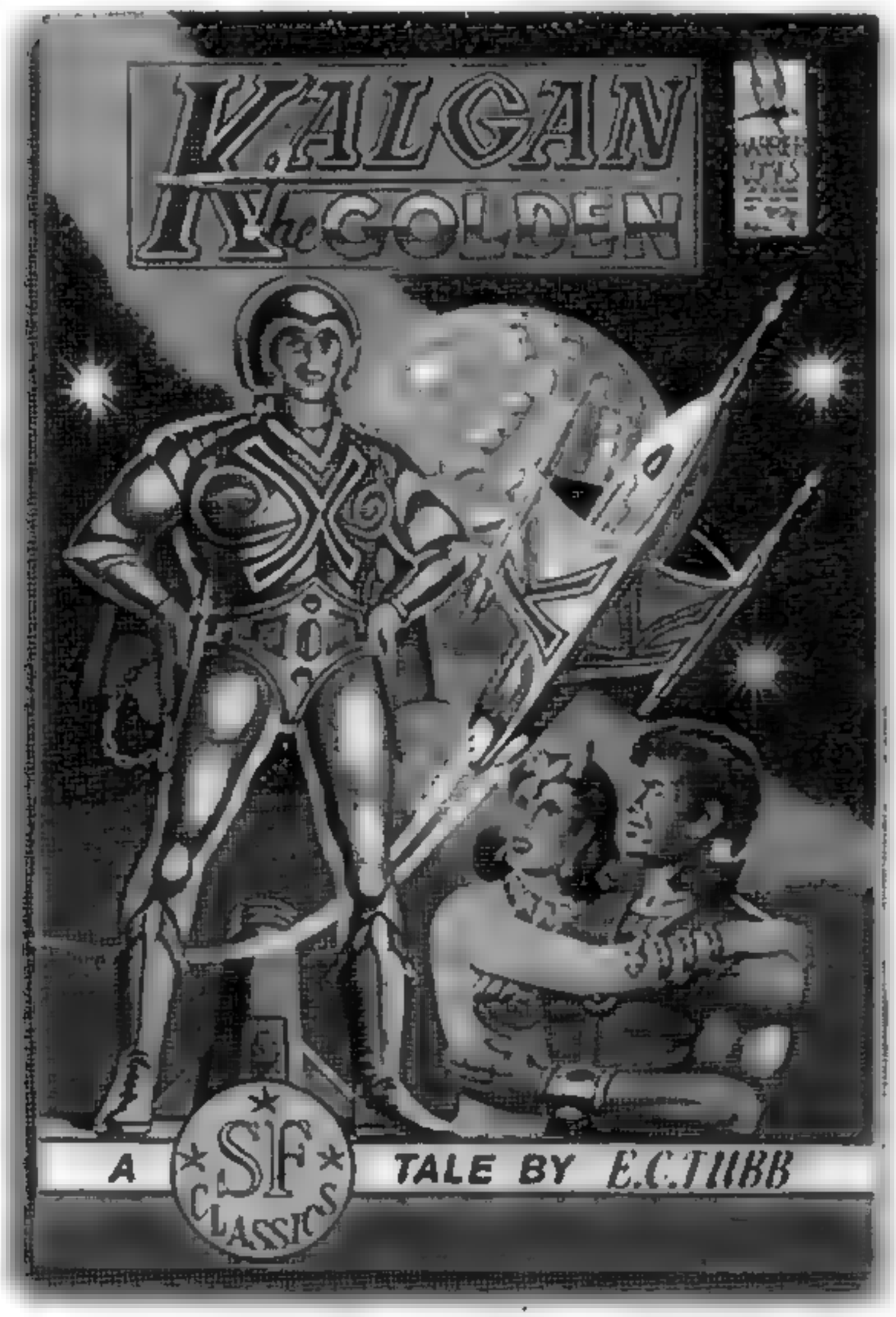
(ABOVE): SOME OF RON TURNER'S BEAUTIFUL PENCIL WORK FROM THE MID 80S

DO RUN RON

In 1936, aged just fourteen, Turner began work at Odhams art studios in London as a trainee artist. Within two years he was providing illustrations for magazines >

Continuing the dramatic adventures of a family who had been lost in space!
Journey to the STARS
AAAA-EEEEEGH! DAD! IT'S HERE! IT'S GOT ME!
STUDY!... NOT NECESSARY... NO CAUSE FOR ALARM
DAD! IT SPOKE!
IT'S ANDY!
YOU? A ROBOT?

(ABOVE): JOURNEY TO THE STARS (SPEED #3, 1980) AND (BELOW) KALGAN THE GOLDEN FROM HARRIER COMICS FROM A FEW YEARS LATER



like *Modern Wonder*, a scientific and technical magazine. Then war broke out and, like most able-bodied men of the time he was called up into the army to fight for King and country.

When he returned to Odhams after dé-mob in the late 40's, he discovered that many of his new work colleagues were involved in producing freelance artwork for Odhams. More to the point they were being paid for doing it. Small-time publishers that had grown from nothing almost overnight were demanding more and more illustrators and writers for their crazy output.

Grasping this opportunity, his peers were hell-bent on producing hundreds of pages of artwork for any magazine or comics that would pay them. Turner liked the idea of a career in comics and set about producing a portfolio decent enough to get him work. He need not have worried, as his work was more than adequate for the various types of work the publishing houses were looking for.

TAKING OFF

Turner arrived on the doorstep of Scion Ltd of Kensington where he decided to try his hand at stripwork for their BIG series of comics. His contributions were mainly sci-fi related stories, the main one being the strip named 'The Atomic Mole'. No prizes for guessing that The Atomic Mole was a nuclear powered burrowing machine which carried its small crew to investigate the subterranean worlds that lay deep beneath the Earth's surface.

Turner's natural flair for the genre was at last seen in its best light when the company began producing SF paperbacks. Turner was the natural choice for cover artist and he would not let them down, supplying some beautifully painted covers for their Vargo Statten series (written by the prolific British writer John Russell Fearn).

The books were an immediate success and the covers were innovative in that they did not feature a stereotypical spaceman/spaceship/planetoid set up, but depicted actual scenes from the story.

Turner obviously read the stories he was asked to paint the cover for.

The success of the line brought many an admirer, from fans to writers to publishers. Turner would put in a day working for Odhams and then work late into the night at home on other paintings until, in 1953, he resigned his position at Odhams and took the bold step of working freelance.

BEING FRANK

Amongst the many great artists of the '50s, one artist, the great Frank Hampson, stood head and shoulders above the rest and had captured Turner's awe and attention.

Turner admired Hampson's work on Dan Dare and wanted to produce his own regular strip. In late 1953, Turner's ideas would come to fruition. He approached his publisher with a concept for a regular series that could possibly rival Dare or at least be of some significance. Turner was producing fully painted covers at the time, mainly as the wrap-around for the 64 page Tit-Bit Sci-Fi pulp novels.

The publisher's only condition was that this new series

was to be produced as a 64 page, digest-sized magazine and was to be on the racks every month. Tit-Bits science fiction comics was born and Turner, at last, had his own creation to work on.

His happiness was short lived, however, as the volume of work became almost impossible for one man to reasonably produce. Not only had he agreed to provide 64 pages per month and a full colour cover but on top of that, Turner was to write the stories and even did the lettering!

Sadly for us but perhaps luckily for Turner's sanity, the magazine folded after only seven issues, even after other artists were brought in to help on the workload. On the upside, Turner had proved to himself that he was capable of writing and drawing the type of work he wanted to do.

A LONE STAR

Tuner was beginning to develop a reputation with publishers and almost immediately after the folding of Tit-Bits science fiction he began writing, drawing and lettering four pages a month of 'Space Ace' for Lone Star comics. This workload was easy compared to his output at Tit Bits and so he was also able to work for other companies where he gained in experience and industry contacts.

In 1954, Rick Random - Space Detective and editor, Ted Holmes came a-knocking.

Fleetway's *Super-Detective Library* had been successfully producing SF stories for a few years and were always on the look out for people who could produce quality work very quickly. Holmes had seen Turner's work and was greatly impressed by it. He contacted him and set him the task of first trying out the character of Rick Random and then, after Turner had shown what he could do with the strip, asked him to develop it as he saw fit.

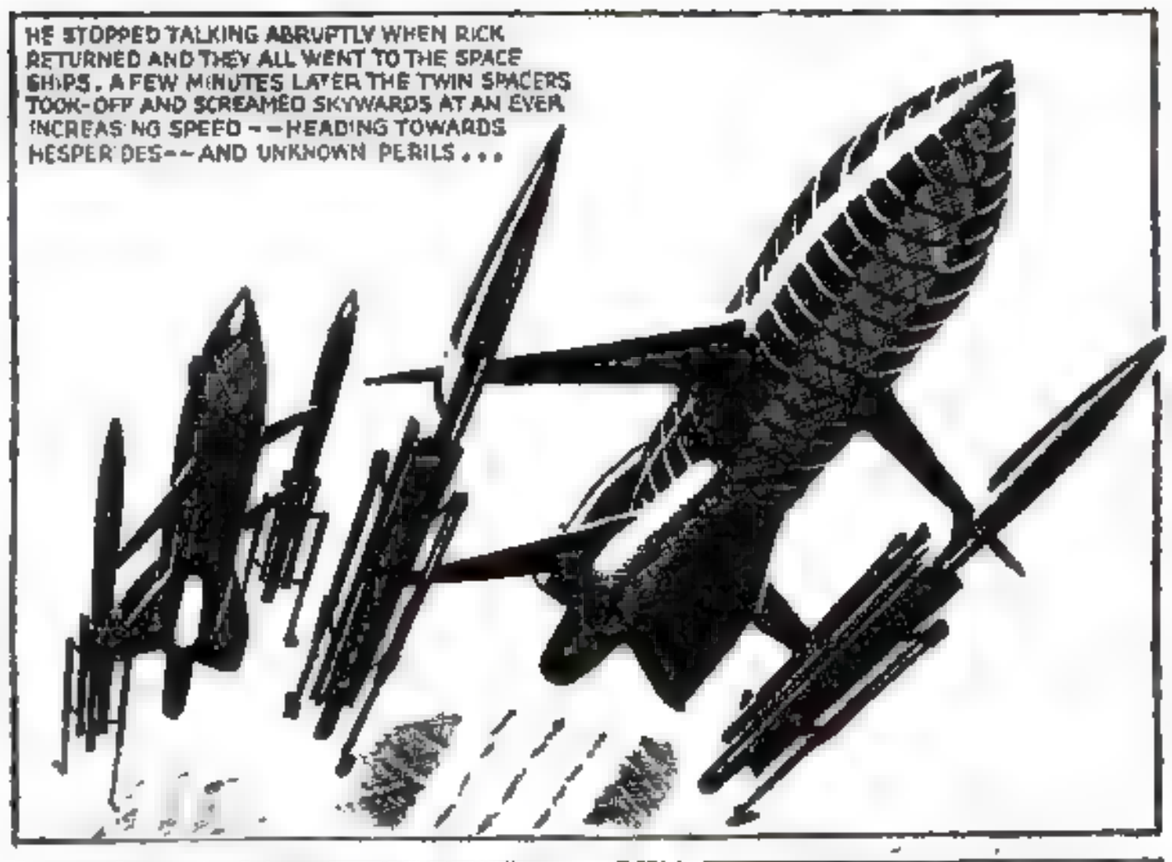
Although Ron would not script the strip, his writing skills came to the fore as he suggested ideas and formats that were readily used by the writers. Turner was now in his element. His new contract had him as illustrator, so there were no script deadlines and, to top it off, he wouldn't have to letter the strip either. Ron could spend his time designing new types of spacecraft and hardware. Well-written scripts were produced for him to let his imagination go to the furthest limits. Unfortunately (for us) Ron didn't get to turn in any covers for the series.

In all, the series lasted a very successful and rewarding five years. Together with 'Space Ace', this body of work represents his finest work of the 50's.

NEW DIRECTIONS

With the demise of Rick Random in the early 60s and science fiction comics seemingly on the wane, Turner turned his creative eye to war-related material. Having been through the war himself, the necessary hardware was not a problem for Ron, nor was the depiction of the trauma of battle.

His obvious talent meant that he continued to be offered a wide range of work, including 'John Steel – Special Agent' and, for *Film Fun*, 'Scoop Donovan'. He was also approached by *Practical* >


HE STOPPED TALKING ABRUPTLY WHEN RICK RETURNED AND THEY ALL WENT TO THE SPACE SHIPS. A FEW MINUTES LATER THE TWIN SPACERS TOOK-OFF AND SCREAMED SKYWARDS AT AN EVER INCREASING SPEED - - HEADING TOWARDS HESPERIDES - - AND UNKNOWN PERILS . . .
BOTH RICK AND CHALMERS WERE EXPERIENCED SPACE TRAVELLERS . . .
HALLO, TONY. ALL WELL ON THIS SHIP. - - - THE COMPUTER GIVES OUR ARRIVAL TIME AS 25 HOURS 10 MINUTES AND 12 SECONDS FROM TAKE-OFF. WILL YOU CHECK THAT PLEASE ? OVER.
ESTIMATED ARRIVAL TIME CORRECT. ALL WELL ON THIS SHIP TOO. I'LL CALL YOU FROM TIME TO TIME. OUT!
13

(ABOVE): A HIGH-SOARING EXAMPLE OF 'RICK RANDOM' IN ACTION
(BELOW): TEENAGE ADVENTURE WITH 'TOBY'S TIMEPIECE'

TOBY'S TIMEPIECE
TOBY WAS THE LUCKY OWNER OF A POCKET-WATCH, WHICH HELD THE SECRET OF TIME TRAVEL. IT WAS DURING A HOLIDAY CRUISE THAT HE BEGAN WONDERING IF HIS TIME PIECE WOULD SUDDENLY TAKE HIM ON AN EVEN LONGER JOURNEY.
IF ONLY I KNEW WHEN YOU WERE GOING TO WORK, TIMEPIECE. STILL! THE WAY IT IS, LIFE'S CERTAINLY INTERESTING!
SUDDENLY, TOBY'S THOUGHTS WERE INTERRUPTED
S.O.S. S.O.S. SINKING FAST REQUEST IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE
THEIR POSITION IS ONLY A FEW MILES FROM US, CAPTAIN!
ENGINE ROOM FULL SPEED AHEAD!
WITHIN MINUTES.
IT'S AN OLD COAL-SHIP!
COR! JUST IN TIME SHE'S GOING DOWN!

Mechanics Magazine who gave him the opportunity to show expertise in drawing machinery again on several colourful covers.

Come the mid-60s and reaching his mid-40s, Ron produced original drawings for Craftmaster painting-by-numbers kits. Turner quickly settled into this routine. The work was easier and harsh deadlines almost non-existent.

Then came the Daleks. And nobody, but nobody, turns down a Dalek!

SF AGAIN

Regular Dalek artist Ron Jennings had tired of the strip and had left for different pastures when a surprised but excited Ron was offered the job. *TV Century 21* was riding high on its success with the Gerry Anderson shows. *Fireball XL5*, *Stingray* and *Thunderbirds* were gracing the comic as were Frank Bellamy, Mike Noble and Ron Embleton.

Big TV shows and even bigger talent to work alongside.

Surprisingly, the Dalek strip (opposite page) would be Ron's first attempt on a full-colour comic strip. Ron relished the chance to once again turn his eye to SF.

With his background in drawing machinery, rendering the Daleks was second nature to Ron and the human characters were even easier than that. Although he had to spend a lot of time on the strip, the results were stunning. This work is often hailed as the best of his career and certainly some of the best he'd produced for years. Looking at the artwork, it is clear that Ron was enjoying himself. His unique colouring, layouts and designs were simply magnificent.

Ron drew the strip for the next two years before it was cancelled from the pages of *TV21*.

TV21 AGAIN

Just after this, Ron moved onto the action SF black and white strip 'The Robot Builders' for the amalgamated *Tiger* and *Hurricane* but Anderson was not far away. New strips were being added to *TV21* all the time and Ron was lured back with work on 'Thunderbirds' for the 1968 Summer Special.

Over the next few years he worked exclusively on all the Gerry Anderson annuals including *Stingray*, *Captain Scarlet* and *Joe 90*, producing some great artwork during that time.

As the '70s dawned Ron found himself drawing for *Whizzer and Chips*, knocking out pages for 'Wondercar', 'Archie's Angels' and 'Danny Drew's Dialling Man'.

I don't believe his style leant itself to this kind of work and, while not putting those very successful comics down, I firmly believe that his talent was all but wasted around that time. Thankfully, more influential people were noticing this too.

John Wagner and Pat Mills had a couple of little ideas up their creative sleeves. Those ideas would produce the comic *2000AD* and the character Judge Dredd in particular and Ron was approached to draw the 'Lawman of the Future'.

The strip was of a more mature nature than Ron had drawn before. Despite its 'comic' origins, Dredd became, and remains, one of the most influential strips for a generation. Its gritty, 'realistic' storylines needed a strong illustrator to depict the often mindless violence and catch the political undertones found within it. The series was a black comedy, a strip laughing at itself and us, showing us a desperate apocalyptic future but with more than a hint of truth behind the laughs.

Ron worked with Wagner and Gerry Finlay-Day on 'Robots', 'Robot Wars' and 'The Solar Sniper' and with Peter Harris on several of 'Tharg's Future Shocks'.

Ultimately, Wagner and Mills decided that Turner's artwork, slick, clean and beautiful though it was, didn't fit the strip as they perceived it and Ron left.

Still employed by *2000AD*, he drew a revival of Rick Random (working with writer Steve Moore on 'Riddle of the Astral Assassin') before moving over to IPC's *Battle -Action* magazine, drawing 'Spinball Wars'.

RICK RANDOM
and the
MYSTERY of the MOVING PLANET
THE STARS THAT TWINKLE IN THE NIGHT SKY FORM A PATTERN THAT HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY MEN SINCE THE DAWN OF TIME.
ACROSS THIS PATTERN, THE PLANETS MOVE SYSTEMATICALLY IN THEIR ORBITS ROUND THE SUN.
THEY HAVE ALWAYS DONE SO WITH SUCH REGULARITY THAT WE BASE ALL OUR TIME-KEEPING ON THEIR MOVEMENTS.
GREAT OBSERVATORIES WATCH THEM FOR THIS VERY PURPOSE AND ARE STILL WATCHING WHEN OUR STORY BEGINS IN 2034 A.D. . . .
IT WAS IN THE SPRING OF THAT YEAR THAT CARL HEPPER, A CLEVER YOUNG ASTRONOMER, SAW SOMETHING IN HIS TELESCOPE THAT MADE HIM GASP IN AMAZEMENT.
HE SAW A PLANET IN THE SKY WHERE THERE HAD NEVER BEEN A PLANET BEFORE!
ANOTHER WORLD HAD ENTERED THE SOLAR SYSTEM!
JIM—JIM! IT CAN'T BE— IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!— QUITE IMPOSSIBLE!
EH?

CHANGES

The 80's arrived with a return for Ron to the colour strip. He produced 'Journey to the Stars' for the new IPC weekly, *Speed*. It seemed, however, that comics had reached their peak in the late 70s and sales were now dwindling. Many merged with other titles and work was thin on the ground. More reprint was being used. Titles and companies folded and in the mid 80s and after a brief spell with the small press comics (*Nick Hazard* and *Kalgan the Golden*), Turner annonunced his retirement.

In the 90s Ron, by then in his seventies, returned to illustrate further SF covers for the American publisher Gryphon Books. He also worked on a new Daleks strip for *Dr Who Magazine*.

Towards the end of 1998, Ron Turner suffered a stroke. This was later followed by a heart attack and he died a few weeks later on 19 December 1998.

Ron Turner may have been a 'lesser known' artist from that era, but he stands tall alongside such illuminairies as Frank Hampson, Frank Bellamy, Don Lawrence and Ron Embleton.

Ron Turner's work still inspires artists today, almost ten years after his death. ●

THE DALEKS

by TERRY NATION

DRAWN BY [illegible] FOR BBC TV'S

DR. WHO

Agent-robot Two K is sent to stop either the Daleks or the Mechanoids winning their galactic war . . .

APPROACHING PLANET SKARO. WILL PROCEED WITH PLAN A.

LEAVING A TRAIL IN THE SAND, BUT I CAN'T HELP THAT MUST FIND OUT HOW WELL PREPARED THE DALEK'S ARE.

THEY MUST HAVE TRACKED MY LANDING. NO COVER HERE. BETTER MOVE... AND FAST!

DESERT NORTH CONTROL SMALL OBJECT FALLEN ON DESERT 23 · LONGLAT NW BY 9. COULD BE A METEORITE. INSTRUCTIONS

2K

HOVERBOUT PATROL TO CENTRAL CONTROL DISCOVERED EVIDENCE OF A LANDING IN THE DESERT.

THERE IS A FURROW IN THE SAND. IT LEADS TOWARDS OUR CITY!

THIS IS THE DALEK INFORMATION CHAMBER. I SHOULD LEARN WHAT I WANT HERE.

IF THAT ROGUE PLANET REACHES THE MECHANOIDS, THE DALEKS MIGHT BE ABLE TO DESTROY THEM. I MUST TRY AND STOP THAT PLANET.

MOVE... AND YOU WILL BE DESTROYED.

THE ROGUE PLANET, SKARDEL, HURTLES TOWARDS THE MECHANOIDS. THEY WILL BE SO OCCUPIED WITH IT, WE CAN ATTACK AND DESTROY THEM.

STOP PRESS

Questions in Senate

Joined by Senators representing many Pacific islands, Senator Mu Fingint, of Fiji, demanded to know the exact plans for dealing with the weed menace. He said that if weed was a danger to shipping, what was to stop it attacking whole islands like his own?

(ABOVE): RON'S FANTASTIC ARTWORK ON THE DALEK STRIP FROM THE 60S GAVE US SOME OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE ILLUSTRATION EVER SEEN AT THAT TIME. CRIKEY! MAKES NO APOLOGIES FOR RE-PRODUCING THIS PAGE AS LARGE AS POSSIBLE!

UM LETTERS!

*For future issues of **Crikey!** let us know what you think about our magazine, British comics, your reactions to features or simply make us laugh.*
*Our address is: **Crikey!** 4 Hillsborough Drive, Unsworth, Bury BL9 8LE.*
Our electricity communication conduit in the electronic world is : www.crikeyuk.co.uk

THEN FROM THE NEARBY BUSHES
HO HO! YOU WERE TOO LATE WITH YOUR BIG BOOTS ENGLANDER! WHILE YOU WERE DANCING IN AGONY WE SLIPPED OUT OF THE SIGNAL BOX!
BLISTERIN' BARNACLES!
BUT SHOCKS WERE NOT OVER FOR THE BIG MAN
OBSERVE! WE SHALL NOW PUT THE ENGINE INTO REVERSE! IT WILL TRAVEL BACK TO SCHLOSSBRUCK... AND WIPE OUT ALL YOUR COMRADES! YOU GET THE POINT, DOLT!
AAARGH!
THE COLOSSAL COMMANDO COULD ONLY HAVE ONE REACTION TO THE PLAN HIS FACE FLUSHED AS HE SHOOK IN THE POWER OF A "RAGIN FURY"!
GREAT WHIRLIN' WINDJAMMERS! TRY TO BLOW UP MY SHIPMATES, WOULD YOU? IF IT'S POINTS YOU'RE SO KEEN ON, I'M ABOUT TO SCORE A FEW MYSELF!
KER-LUNK!
WE'LL START WITH YOU, SLOBBER CHOPS!
HIMMEL... OOF!
THE LEVERS OF THE SIGNAL BOX BEGAN TO FLY.
DONNERWETTER!
THUNK!
YOU BILGE RATS ARE ON THE WRONG LINES!
CONTINUED OVERLEAF

Um Crikey

I agree with David Beattie (*Crikey!* 6) – the DC Comics black and white Showcase format would be ideal for DC Thomson and IPC Fleetway back catalogues. And frankly I would welcome with open military arms 500 pages of Captain Hurricane. Let's not get too po-faced here.

The Valiant was the centre plank of my 1970s comic book reading and the good captain and his sidekick were constantly engaged in very, thankfully, un-PC stories. I would be more than happy to pay for a thick wedge of their adventures. But possibly not Zip Nolan's, the clues were always so lame; mind you the bike art was good. Speaking of which, I would buy the Q-Bikes and the Q-karts from the *Beano* in the same format, too.

Crikey! gets more impressive with each issue and I'm one very happy subscriber. The house style is relaxed and friendly. I find myself reading every article, completing the gaps in my knowledge, as well as refreshing the memories of UK comics that I have. I would like to see longer articles and interviews but then I would also like *Crikey!* to be double its current page count and that's probably not economically viable. Maybe a bumper Summer Special at some point though!

The whole publication is like coming home to my comic reading roots, to the comics that I used to buy before my head got turned by Marvel and DC.

Maybe it's because I'm older and from the perspective of my advancing years, okay the middle ground of my fourth decade, I can see that my total desire for bland superheroes and their trite soap opera lives, in full colour, on a monthly basis, was a mistake. The subtext of which often crops up in my comic book review work for *Comics International*. But I digress, whilst making a play for a comics review section in *Crikey!*

Crikey! goes a long way to a reunion of where my comic read ng habits burgeoned and where they should have stayed.

Like I said earlier: I'm home again. Thank you.

Steve Hooker
Internet

Thanks for the kind words, Steve.

In a way, the entire magazine is a comic review section! One of the reasons why we avoid news in Crikey! *is that it can date the magazine so quickly. That said it might be fun to pick an old comic and review it as a new launch!*

Um Crikey!,

Issue five was another great issue. The stand out article for me was the interview with Gil Page. Although I had not heard of him before (it's so hard to find out the names of people in UK comics), I loved reading about the background to my comics of the early 70s.

I also loved the older article on comics from the 50s. And while I'm at it, I thought the article on *Oink* from the 80s was interesting (if a little short).

I think what makes *Crikey!* work for me is the fact that you cover ALL British comics and not just the ones from a particular decade or two.

Keep that mix coming and I'll keep buying.

Tom Devine,
Wells, Somerset

We're trying to cover as wide an area as we can, Tom, and we're always on the look out for unusual ideas for articles. The Gil Page interview appears to have gone down very well.

Um Crikey!,

Picked up *Crikey!* 3 from my local comic shop here in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada and really enjoyed the heck out of it and have been checking out the Diamond Previews catalogue waiting for the next one, but so far no luck. Will you be distributing any more issues over here to North America or what?

I really hope you do because I've always been a bit of an anglophile. In fact, being born in 1960, I'm probably part of the last generation of Canadians that considered ourselves still partially British in some shape or form. We sang "God Save the Queen" at all our school assemblies. Now that I think of it, until I was about five years old we still flew the old colonial Red Ensign, only getting our familiar red and white maple leaf flag a year or so before our Centennial in 1967.

When growing up, nearly a third of the stuff shown on local television was British in origin, including *Robin Hood*, *The Avengers*, *On the Buses*, *Are You Being Served?*, *Space: 1999*, *Benny Hill* and the *Carry On...* movies on British Sunday Theatre.

We didn't get *Dr Who* where I lived, but all the novelizations showed up regularly in local bookstores and I became a fan of the show through them.

And the comics? A lot of the bookstores in the bigger cities still carry the current issues of *Beano* and *Dandy*, and I still go searching through used book stores and thrift shops for old annuals. My favourite characters being the Spider and especially the Phantom Viking (I think because he's the only superhero whose mild-mannered alter ego really was meek and mild, only becoming brave and bold when he puts on the winged helmet of his Norse ancestor).

So, as you can, see, I'm rather genetically programmed for being a fan of your wonderful magazine. I'd love to see more, and I'm also interested in getting back issues of what I've missed, although I must admit I'm a little bit confused on how to order them (just go to

PayPal, type in your website address and then just send the amount required, right?). To be honest, I'm a little bit daunted by the difference in the value between the pound and the Canadian dollar (over double, so if it takes me a little while to work up my nerve I apologize!).

Anyway, I do hope you will be sending future issues our way because you have one Canadian who would love to see them.

Sincerely,

Jeff Taylor

Victoria, BC, Canada (a town that, I kid you not, used to advertise itself as "More British than the British!")

Glenn and I used to work on the official Coronation Street *magazine and we actually sold more copies in Canada than we did in the UK, so I know how successful UK pop culture can be other there.*

Sorry if the PayPal seems a bit confusing – the idea is to go to our website first (www.crikeyuk.co.uk) and then click through on the PayPal button.

For the moment we are not with Diamond. We were having problems matching our print schedules with theirs. So for now we do not have overseas distribution. I can recommend a sub, however...

Um Crikey!,

I have just read *Crikey!* 5. What a great issue. Very professional. *Crikey!* is certainly growing up.

I love 'Nutty Notions'. Whether we thought the stories were so 'nutty' at the time I do wonder? The *Warrior* article was fascinating, and I was intrigued to see the art credited to D.Jackson. Looked very similar to work by Jose Ortiz. *Thunder* and *Romeo* I don't remember. Maybe I am too young!

The Frank Hampson article was a poignant piece of writing, and a nice record of what he achieved. I always love to read the 'My Comicy Saturday' feature, which brings back happy memories to many I am sure.

Nowadays I subscribe, for my children of course, to the *Beano*. They love it, and I love them reading it, when I finally pass it on. We also enjoy *Classics from the Comics*. Why this isn't better publicised I don't know?!

Keep up the great work!

Piers.

Internet

Thanks Piers – I can't understand why Classics *doesn't get a better distribution, either. The only shop I can find it in is the large Smiths in our Arndale shopping centre in Manchester. It appears to be listed for 'A' shop branches only. (i.e. the big stores.)*

Wahoo Crikey!

Heartfelt congratulations on a superbly produced, insightful and thoroughly entertaining magazine tribute to British comics in all its diverse forms.

Specific praise is long overdue for your enthusiastic and well-researched profiles on the many, sadly neglected artists who have bestowed so much fun, fantasy and pleasure into our lives. A warm thank you to you all. The *Crikey!* crew deserve a big Desperate Dan style pat on the back (together with a barn sized cow pie!)

Your nostalgia-tinted pages elicit that same sense of wonder (and inspired lunacy) which was once a common feature of our collective childhood. With all the worldly wickedness now overshadowing our days, it is no surprise that many of us occasionally choose to look back at the cultural remnants of a simpler time. Through your magazine, that 'scuffed knee' (inner child) paradise is regained as our weightless, and worry free, imaginations float across the *Crikey!* cosmos!

For me, the enjoyment of comics remain a comforting, life-affirming, and even therapeutic experience where the 'anarchic little rascal' in my psyche is allowed to come out and play.

You are the Silver Surfer Sentinels of a new Galactus age of comic culture reappraisal and artistic testimony. I wish you all the best of Bash Street luck (cue the black moggy school mascot!) on your madcap journey. And beware the perils of planet Whoopee!!

SIZZLING ACTION WITH LEGGE'S ELEVEN THE TALENTED TEAM OF SOCCER MISFITS INSIDE!
VALIANT
7d
EVERY MONDAY
30th MAY, 1967
IT COULD HAPPEN
HOW MODERN-DAY DISCOVERIES COULD BE DEVELOPED IN YEARS TO COME

Meanwhile back on planet Earth, I would like to discuss a few points arising from issue 5 if I may. In response to Geraint Davies' letter in which he, rather dismissively, refers to the British Marvel B&W reprints as being "not the real thing", I would dispute that attitude. I regard *Smash*, *Pow*, *Fantastic* and *Terrific* Power comics as being, in some respects, actually superior to the original colour comics.

As we are aware, it is an unfortunate fact that American comics, particularly those from the Silver Age era, suffer from inferior colour print quality; an unavoidable aspect of technical and financial limitiations. As a result, a considerable number of these comics exhibit off-set splurged, or muted colour reproduction. Such crude defects detrimentally impinge upon, or erode, the finer subtleties of line, form or shading as originally rendered by the artist – although they do possess a pristine pop art tone and charm.

As a young impressionable Power Comics devotee, I learned to appreciate, for instance, the dynamic 'solid' grandeur of Jack Kirby or the contrasting expressionistic 'fluidity' of Steve Ditko. The popular Alan Class reprint comics also appealed to me for this reason. It was my fevered imagination which 'coloured' these comics just as it was my imagination which 'listened to' the speech bubbles!

Taoistically speaking, less is more in this regard.

Power Comics' main weakness was, as Geraint pointed out, the fragmentary (instalment based) nature of presentation which interrupted the flow of each story. A big bonus, tho', was the blown up panel size (to fit the larger page format). This facilitated a greater absorption in the finer details of the action portrayed. Also, the finely crafted front and back pages of *Fantastic* and *Terrific* gave an extra colour dimension to these underrated comics. The back page superhero/supervillain portraits, in particular, were unique to the British publications.

Geraint guesses that it was the gradual seduction of 60s B&W Marvel virgins by the brazen American imports which contributed to Power Comics eventual impotence in the market place (ironic considering Power Comics first pioneered the weekly promotion of the Marvel Universe in Britain). Again I have to disagree with Geriant on this point. There was, in fact, a healthy market for non-colour Marvel reprints during the 1970s. A prime example is the popularity of MWOM (The Mighty World of Marvel) which continued with B&W reprints. It would be interesting to hear if other readers have alternative viewpoints on the B&W versus Colour debate.

Finally, a brief comment on the *Romeo* romance comic article by Tony Ingram. He >

Biff! Thud! Wham! Ther
THE HILLYS AND THE BILLYS
AND SO SAM GOES HEAD-FIRST INTO ACTION AGAINST THE BILLYS
The Hillys' DEEP-laid plot — doesn't work out as they thought!
THE HILLYS AND THE BILLYS
SOON —
BUT

Um Crikey!

Many thanks for *Crikey!* 6, and for getting the excellent Ray Moore to underpin my *Hilly and the Billys* reminiscence with a more meaty blog of the late, unsung great, George Martin.

Regarding Tony Ingram's rundown of DCT humour papers, Tony may be aware that *Magic* underwent a brief comeback in the mid-1970s. Says the late Denis Gifford's British Comics Encyclopaedia (a partwork-by-mail for the late Association of Comics Enthusiasts): 'Notice in No. 80 of The Magic Comic, 25 Jan 1941: "This copy... is the last to appear for the present, owing to the War... As soon as possible The Magic will come out again...".

The Magic was eventually revived on 31 Jan 1976 -- 35 years plus later!'

Best,

Dave Robinson, Leicester

You should know by now, Dave – you can't rush greatness!

concludes that these comics were slightly ahead of their time and that "the readership of *Romeo* were considered sophisticated enough to deal with it"! Out of curiosity, I picked up a few of these comics at a fair recently and I was amazed to discover in amongst all the usual 'stereotypical girl' meets 'hunk of the week' dross, a gritty, drug-addled 'Forbidden Island' storyline concerning a cocaine addicted *femme fatale* on the make!

This was hotstuff in 1958. It's a bit like finding an EC horror strip in a Disney comic! It does confirm Tony's conclusion that this comic was occasionally ahead of its time. It certainly pushes the boundaries well beyond the cozy idealistic confines of romantic wish fulfillment. Such surprising discovery in the most unlikeliest of publications has taught me to take nothing for granted in the wacky world of comics.

John Devaney
Berkshire

Wahoo Crikey!? Are you trying to start a rebellion, John? And if you're scarred of Planet Whoopee, well – let's just say that we have a certain feature coming your way that might drive you back behind the settee.

Um Crikey!

Could you please send me a sample issue of *Crikey!* – if possible, the Dan Dare issue featured in your recent ad in *Book and Magazine Collector*. I have enclosed £3.99.

I also need help! For years I've been trying to track down a character called *Morg of the Mammoths*, an adventure strip set in the Stone Age. I seem to remember that it ran in *Lion* or *Tiger*.

Do you know anything about this strip? My searches have so far proved fruitless.

Thanks for your time.

Robin Smith,
London

We passed your query on to our resident expert Ray Moore and he came through with flying colours. This is what Ray had to say:

'Morg of the Mammoths' ran in Lion *in issues dated 19 October 1963 to 18 January 1964. It was the story of how an ancient Briton brought a marauding herd of said hairy pachyderms to heel. From it sprang an immediate sequel 'Journey to the Edge of the World' (*Lion *25 January 1964 to 9 May of the same year) in which Morg and his by now tame mammoth companion Karga go in search of a sacred spear. The artist was the same in both cases but, as far as I'm aware, his name remains unknown. One further point – I'm fairly certain that the original Morg strip was reprinted in its entirety in the 1973* Lion *and* Thunder Holiday Special.

Ray

Um Crikey!

Another great issue came tumbling through my letterbox. I was going to write mailbox but there's something about *Crikey!* that makes you want to write letterbox instead. It's a measure of your nostalgic feel I reckon.

I'm so glad you put the 'Nutty Notions' at the start of *Crikey!* because it saves me having to start it at the back or somewhere. It's easily my favourite part of the magazine. What makes it work for me is the irreverent way you talk about the notions – and the sheer outlandishness of the ideas. If people ever needed proof that the English are indeed a nation of eccentrics all they would have to do is read a couple of 'Nutty Notions'!

My other favourite part is the regular *My Comicy Saturday*. Tony Ingram's in issue 5 brought back loads of memories for me as it was the same period I was reading everything in the newsagent. My wife tolerates my interest in comics (well, to be honest, I've caught her reading several on more than one occasion) and I've never had friends who had the same passion for old comics as me. So reading the 'My Comicy Saturday' makes me feel a bit more normal than perhaps I otherwise would! At least I know I'm not alone.

Keep up the good work – new sub enclosed.

Nigel Kerr,
Lincoln

Nigel – if you are using people like Tony as your reference for normal you have serious problems! Let's stick with the realisation that you are not alone in your funny papers addiction. ●

That's it for this issue. Keep those missives coming and we'll meet again in about 60 days!

BLASE'S MOST WANTED

WOW! A SET OF NINE (COUNT 'EM) NINE COLLECTABLE CARDS FOR YOU TO CUT OUT & KEEP!

1. THE PHANTOM

The character was created in 1936 by Lee Falk and appears in newspapers and comic books all over the world. We're particularly interested in the old L. Miller 1/- reprints and other early english language editions from around the 40's & 50's.

2. RADIO FUN

This weekly was published from 1938 to 1961. During its long run, it carried many strips featuring radio stars of the day as well as many classic characters that were created specially for the comic. The Falcon is one that Ugly Duckling Press will be looking at soon. We're interested in buying single issue collections or bound volumes.

3. FILM FUN

Published from 1920 until 1962, this paper racked up 2225 issues, making it a bit of an institution in the comics world. Many stars of classic comedy films had their fictitious escapades chronicled in picture strip form over the years. We are interested in buying collections of single issues or bound volumes.

4. BRITISH WEEKLY COMICS

There are too many titles to list on the back of a humble trading card, but if they were published prior to the 80's we will probably be interested in them. Comics from Amalgamated Press, I.P.C., Fleetway, Hulton Press, Odhams, D.C. Thomson etc. are all wanted in either collections of single issues or bound volumes.

5. GERRY ANDERSON

Always popular and always wanted are comics featuring the characters from the various TV series created by Gerry Anderson. You know what we mean... Thunderbirds, Fireball XL5, Joe 90, Supercar, Stingray, Captain Scarlet and all the rest. As usual, we're interested in single copy collections or bound volumes.

6. ORIGINAL ARTWORK

We are always interested in original art from British or American comics, daily or weekly newspaper strips and selected material from european comics and other overseas periodicals. Contact us and let us know what you have to sell so that we can make you an offer.

7. TIN SIGNS

We're on the lookout for those old pieces of street jewellery known as "Tin Signs", especially if they feature advertisements for comics, old boy's papers, magazines and newspapers. We are also interested in similar advertising ephemera in paper or card. The more graphic the sign, the more we'll like it.

8. AUSTRALASIAN COMICS

We are always interested to see old comics from Australia and New Zealand such as Phantom Ranger, Captain Atom, The Shadow, Silver Starr, Sir Falcon, Grey Domino, Green Skeleton, Lone Avenger, Crimson Comet, Dick Weston, Jet Fury, Hooded Rider, Yarmak, Char Chapman, The Panther and dozens more.

9. BRITISH "INDEPENDENT" COMICS

We're always looking for the old 6d and 1/- comics featuring original superheroes and spacemen as featured in the limited edition Ugly Duckling Press production, "GREAT BRITISH FANTASY COMIC BOOK HEROES". Other types are wanted for possible future productions. Contact us now and let us know what you've got.

PRESENTED FREE WITH CRIKEY! THE GREAT BRITISH COMICS MAGAZINE!

Blase's MOST WANTED Email: blasebooks@aol.com

Blase Books, Heavelwood, Britchfield Rd., Redhatch BA7 6PN, U.K.
Email: blasebooks@aol.com

WATCH OUT FOR UGLY DUCKLING PRESS

BLASÉ'S MOST WANTED

WOW! A SET OF NINE (COUNT 'EM) NINE COLLECTABLE CARDS FOR YOU TO CUT OUT & KEEP!

1. THE PHANTOM

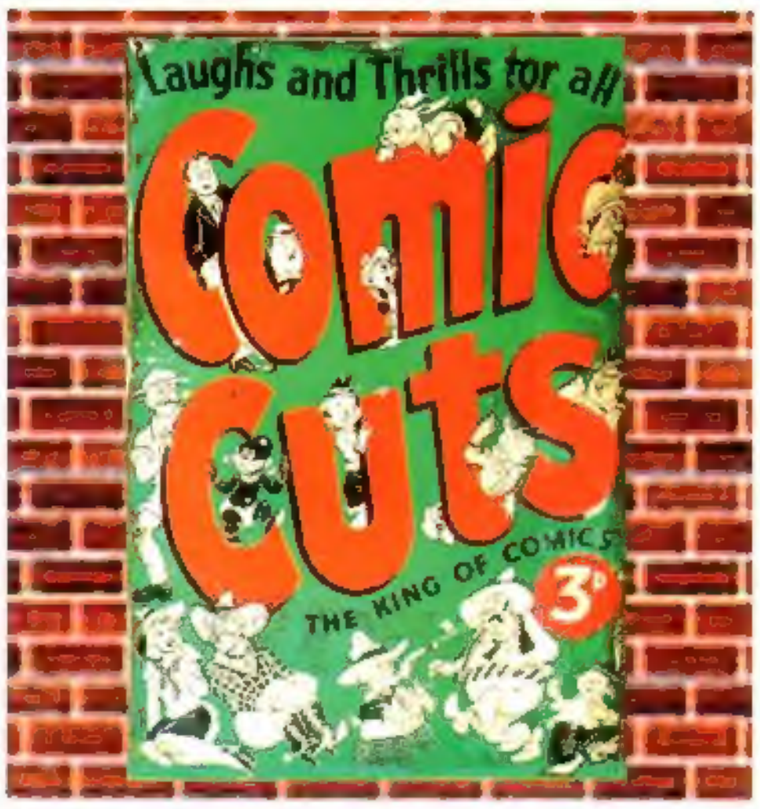
2.RADIO FUN

3. FILM FUN

4. BRITISH WEEKLY COMICS

5. GERRY ANDERSON

6. ORIGINAL ARTWORK



7. TIN SIGNS

8. AUSTRALASIAN COMICS

9. BRITISH "INDEPENDENTS"

WATCH OUT FOR UGLY DUCKLING PRESS

Blasé
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Email: blasebooks@aol.com